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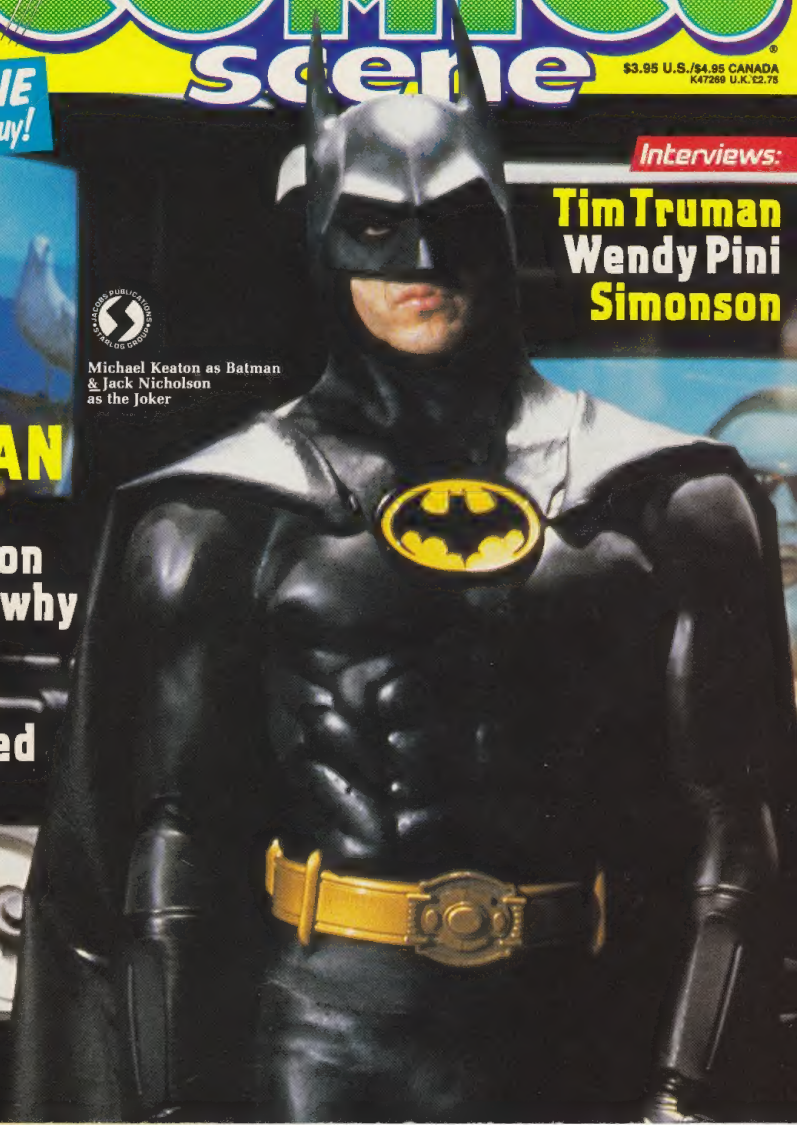
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COMICS scene

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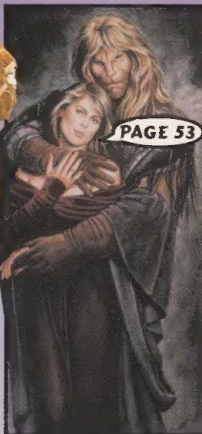
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WORD BALLOONS

This Year's Fashion

Is'n't it incredible? Had you heard?? Has anyone screamed it out on your street or perhaps at one of the nearby shopping malls???

Comics have grown up! Wham!! They just aren't for kids anymore!!! Biff!!!! And holy cape & cowl, they're making movies and TV shows and those funny animated cartoons out of them!!!! They're even making a Batman movie!!!!!!

Well, of course, you knew all that. I knew all that. And everybody who reads comics knew all that.

Funny, but the mainstream media doesn't. I've watched—as I'm sure you have—the whole thing over the last few years. It's so tiresomely predictable. Whenever comic books and strips get examined in major magazines and local papers or saluted on TV and radio, it's almost always the same. I could write the breathless patter myself—and I just did, back in paragraph two. Throw in a couple more whams, biffs and pows if you want. Be sure to use lotsa overheated punctuation!!!!!! And add a twist of "Good grief!", "What's up, Doc?" or "Up, up and away." Then, before you can say "SHAZAM!", you have the typical mainstream media story about comics.

I don't know about you, but I don't really want to read those articles anymore. I've read far too many of them in *Newsweek* and *Time* and *USA Today*. I've seen the provocatively shallow stories on TV news and magazine programs. And good lord (choke), I've watched *Entertainment Tonight*.

Occasionally, the mainstream media does it right. After all, film historian Leonard Maltin, one of animation's foremost experts, reports regularly on the field on that very same *Entertainment Tonight* (and in my opinion, he is the main reason to watch it).

All this comes to mind because it's getting worse. Superman's 50th anniversary was one spark, but now there's the firestorm of hysteria—and that's the perfect description—over the Batman movie. Add in *The Punisher*, *The Return of Swamp Thing*, the upcoming *Dick Tracy*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Roger Rabbit* and a few others and you have that most awesome of journalistic events. As nature abhors a vacuum, so does the media love a trend. And wham, biff, pow, it's a sizzling hot, hot trend.

So, that's why you're seeing so much more on comics (looks great, less filling) in those major magazines and on those big-time TV shows. That's why *The Wall Street Journal* produced an incredibly misleading story on *Batman* (one of the sparks for this editorial, since I was more than alarmed at being quoted out of context in such a journalistic icon). And that's why you can expect more essays like this one—as other trendy commentators jump on the chuck wagon to discuss this sizzling hot, hot trend.

One thing's for certain. The majority of those stories will still be written and reported in the same wham, biff, pow-condescending manner. Comics have indeed grown up. Maybe one day in writing about comics, those in the mainstream media will follow.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS as the summer ends. **Steve Bisette** and **Peter Laird** team to unleash the **Commandosaurus**. . . **Batman** production artist **Michael White** unveils the film's explosive finale in never-before-published storyboards detailing the struggle between the Dark Knight and the Clown Prince of Crime. All this and more is in **COMICS SCENE #9**, on sale **August 22, 1989**.

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, next month heralds the debut of a brand-new sister magazine, **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR**. This annual is filled with all-color views of the comics scene as well as prop maestro **John Evans'** handy-dandy guide to building a Batmobile. . . **Adam West's** reactions to the **Batman** phenomena. . . and **Stan Lee**, providing an insider's look at Marvel's upcoming TV and movie projects. Plus: eight amazing fold-out posters, and many other delights. Look for **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR #1**, on sale **July 25, 1989**.

Wolfman By Night

Creeping through the graveyard of both classic and less beloved titles, Marv Wolfman pauses, not to pay his respects to these fallen comics but to raise two of his more macabre masterpieces from the dead, a project that horrifies even him.

"I've been asked to do a four-part Prestige Format *Tomb of Dracula* for Marvel," the scribe reveals. "That one is fairly scary in many ways because the book has a very good reputation and I have to surpass it. So, I'm proceeding a little bit slower than I would like because every time I come up with something, I just don't feel it's right for

COMICS SCENE

"Dead" to the World

For Steve Bissette, unleashing cadres of cannibal corpses is nothing new, but then, neither is this latest batch of carnivores he's allowing to feast on the innocent. With the approval of zombie master George Romero and John Russo, Bissette and co-writer Tom Skulan will be carrying out the grisly work of letting the *Night of the Living Dead* fall on the comics page. Throughout the four-part adaptation, they'll be digging up details from Romero and Russo's 1968 screenplay, Russo's 1974 novel and, of course, the movie itself. The scary part is that FantaCo won't be releasing the deluxe mini-series until 1990.

The original *Tomb of Dracula* "may be considered too tame" these days, fears Wolfman. "Yet I don't want to go totally over to the heavy gore some writers use. My preference is always for terror."

"Roy Thomas is doing a storyline in *Dr. Strange*, the fitting book, that will repair the situation," Wolfman explains. "Roy sent me his plotline so I won't contradict anything when we do the resurrection of Dracula."

Fortunately, no such continuity demons can plague the writer as he works on reorganizing the somewhat less notorious *Night Force*.

"In my mind, *Night Force* is the

best idea I've ever come up with for a brand new comic book series," insists Wolfman. "I'm surprised nobody picked it up for TV because it's a really good set-up for an anthology series, where you have one main host and then you bring in these other characters all the time."

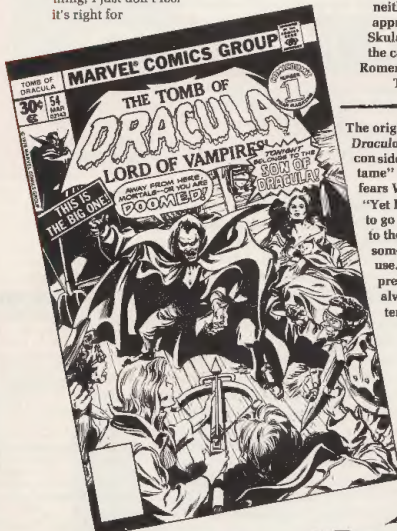
The enigmatic, manipulative Baron Winters, self-appointed leader of the occult organization, "will be back" for this forthcoming mini-series from DC, Wolfman notes. "This takes place on a college campus, and it introduces mostly a new cast. It's a really bizarre story too, based somewhat on reality and then in comes my plot."

Karen Berger is its editor. Assuming that she likes it, or has suggestions, we'll probably start working on it right after I'm finished with the *Batman* stories [*Batman: Year Three* and the *New Titans* crossovers, see page 22].

"I'm trying not to take on more work than I can handle logically," he says. After all, even as he faces these frightening prospects, he'll also be helping Marvel Comics' *Present Wolverine's* multi-part trip to China, covering Jon Sable, Freelance while he hunts down Maggie the Cat and twin gunmen, and coming up with "a very off-the-wall romance story" for *Innovation's Scandals*. Consequently, since the end of the animated *Superman* series' first and only season, Wolfman has foregone any more work in the forbidding world of children's television.

"What I've decided to do is to get my comics, in terms of the storylines, characters and deadlines, back on target the way they should be, because that is the thing I do, that's my living." Remarks Marv Wolfman, "Any animation will wait 'till all of that is done."

—Daniel Dickholtz



this story. Since it's only a one-shot—even though it's four parts—I have to try to make it better than anything I had done in the regular book.

"Rachel Van Helsing is very important to the story. So is Frank Drake. Whether or not Blade is in it, I'm not sure at the moment. As I said, I'm still working out the details, and I keep rejecting so much that I can't be certain at this particular moment what will be the final story."

Still, some may wonder how the Lord of Vampires himself could possibly be included. Those titillated by terror may recall that some years ago, Stephen Strange, the world's foremost practitioner of the mystic arts, had found the means to do away with the undead apparently forever.



Every door of his Georgetown mansion opens for Baron Winters but the front one. That leads to the here and now and is reserved solely for those who need his *Night Force*

Night Force Art: Gene Colan/Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.



Nightmare Art: Rich Buckler & Alfredo Alcala/Courtesy Marvel Entertainment Group



One doesn't dare doze off while browsing through Marvel's latest batch of black and white magazines. Already, there's a new rash of *Nightmares* at newsstands on Elm Street. But as writer Steve Gerber investigates the matter, he's certain they're all connected to the new title featuring Freddy Krueger. It premieres in July, weeks before the fiend's latest film awakens in theaters.



The Vault of "Horror"

The thought of yet another terror anthology haunting the direct-sales shops is enough to fill most readers with dread, but what makes *Horror* somewhat more startling than the rest of that grim group is the fact it's *not* devoted entirely to comics. Braced against tales from the likes of *Deadworld*'s Vincent Locke and *Media/Star's* Gary McCuskey are pages teeming with poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction, though all focus on the unsettling. The \$3.95, 80-page *Illustrated Book of Fears* begins feeding phobias quarterly this month.



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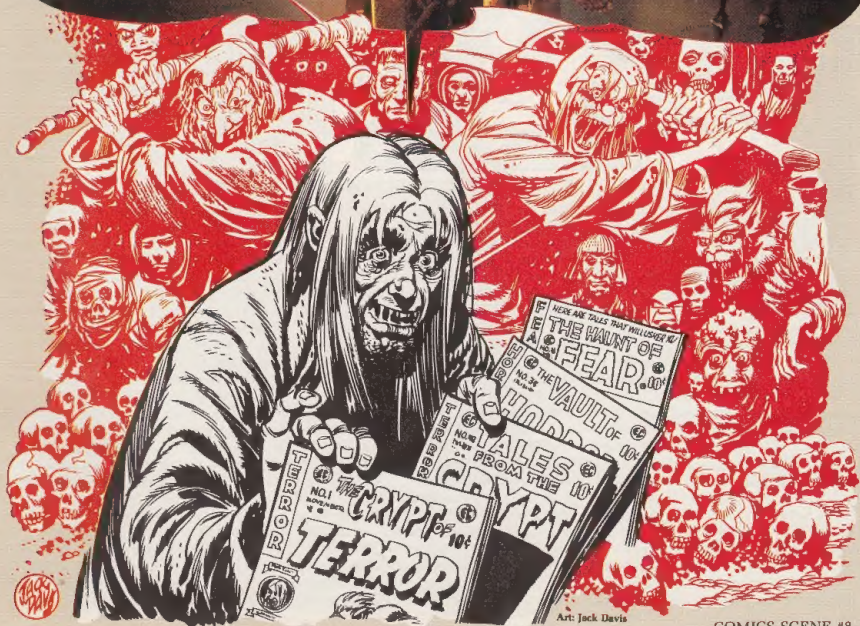
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Photo: Aaron Rapoport



As told to BLOODY BILL WARREN!



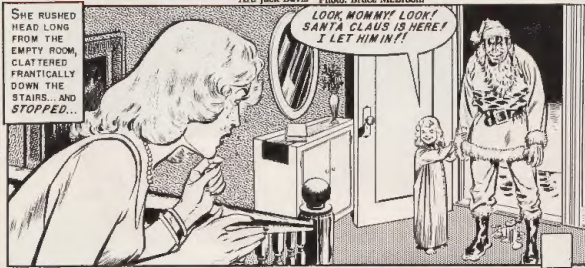
Art: Jack Davis

Mary Ellen Trainor has been a very bad girl. And Larry Drake will do more than put coal in her stocking from this tale from *The Vault of Horror* #35 opens.



Art: Jack Davis

Photo: Bruce McBroom



Santa Art: Johnny Craig

Heh, heh, heh! Yeah, it's me, your old pal, the Crypt-Keeper back again! I know, I know, you thought I was dead and buried!

But HBO, Joel Silver, William Teitler and a horror-host of crud-criminals have pulled me out of my, uh, home, dusted me off and plunked me down in a creep-crypt to spin a new collection of yawp-yarns! Yes, that's right—a cable TV series of *Tales from the Crypt* is about to make its demented debut! (Overseas, you lucky monsters can see the first three as a feature in movie theaters!)

Maybe it was the knife I held at his throat, but Teitler seemed honest when he exclaimed, "Tales from the Crypt—the comic book, the stories are unique. They're original, almost like American folklore. They're pieces of American vernacular culture, as characteristic as Airstream trailers and Norman Rockwell. EC Comics are a benchmark, like a later generation's *Zap Comix*. The incredible

thing is that the stories have lent themselves extraordinarily well to contemporary adaptation."

You've checked to see that all the doors and windows are locked, haven't you? Get a grip on your nerves, lie back in your grave, and I'll fill you in on all the delirium-details of the new slimefest soon to be oozing its way over your terrorvision screen—at least over the screens of those of you boils and ghouls sharp enough to subscribe to HBO!

From my putrid pal The Vault Keeper's rag, *The Vault of Horror*, come "Collection Completed" (issue #25), as well as "...And All through the House..." (#35), which Fred (Monster Squad) Dekker wrote and Bob Zemeckis directed! Then from the curdled cauldron of that reeking recipe rustler, The Old Witch, come "Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone" (*The Haunt of Fear* #21), directed by Richard (Superman) Donner, "Lover Come Hack to Me" (#19), helmed by Tom (*Fright Night*)

Holland, and "Only Sin Deep" (#24), directed by Howard (Some Kind of Wonderful) Deutch! And from the very first EC horror-rag of all, *The Crypt of Terror* #17, is Walter (The Warriors) Hill's choice, "The Man Who Was Death!"

You'll notice one thing, I hope! There are no stories (of these first six) from my magazine, the one that gives this show its title, *Tales from the Crypt* itself! All I can say is, Silver and Teitler, the next time around, there had better be at least one authentic *Tale from the Crypt*, or—I'll be seeing you!

But for this fetid few, they've hired suitably demented directors of freaky films! Walter Hill, for instance! Never dipped a toe into the hot waters of horror before, but he's still the right man for this jibbering job! His terror-tale is about an executioner who loves his work! But then, his stupid state abolishes this guy's favorite sport, capital punishment! Being an inventive fellow—heh! heh!—the executioner goes into business for himself!

"I suppose you've seen the Russ Cochran reprints of the old EC comic books?" Hill asked when I cornered him in a coffin! "I'm a great fan of those. When I was a kid, I used to get a lot of the old EC comics, read them, trade them and all that. I certainly don't think there would be this show without the Russ Cochran reprints, because I think they reinvigorated a whole new set of interest in the endeavor." Ten years ago, Horrible Hill was drooling in delight when Paramount decided to do a new movie of *Tales from the Crypt*! Dangerous David Cronenberg and Jolting John Carpenter were to be the other directors! But the project fell through, so later, Hill recommended the idea to juicy Joel Silver—and got the bucks from HBO!

"I still very much wanted to do this story, because I thought it was an interesting idea," Hill howls! "My story is not really very scary. In lurid, melodramatic form, it's kind of an interesting approach to getting inside this guy's head, this guy who throws the switch out at the state prison."

Some of Hill's movies, like *Streets of Fire* and *Crossroads*, kind of edge up to freakish fantasy, and he was one of the producers of the delicious, delirium-delivering *ALIEN*! "I kind of like science fiction, but there's a lot of it I don't think I'm quite right for. The technology of science fiction doesn't terribly interest me, though some things I see are quite good. I'm drawn to the characters and the story wherever it takes place."

He has the oozing effrontery to add some thoughts on why he makes movies in the first place! "It's kind of having vague feelings about a subject, so that when you tell a story, you're working them out from inside yourself. What it's about is the film. It's a good way to make a living—and it is how I make a living. It's a job. Why do any of us do what we do? It's kind of mysterious, isn't it?"



Hey, you can't fault the guy who loves his work. "The Man Who Was Death" gets a real charge from his job—heh, heh—in this adaptation from *The Crypt of Terror* #17.



Art: Jack Davis

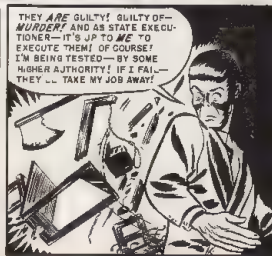
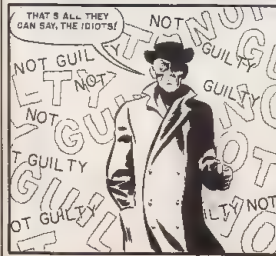
Of course, these TV things can't be done without a producer, sort of the way we couldn't get rid of Weird William Gaines in the old EC days: Joel Silver—who hid out when I tried to talk to him, but I know where you're hiding, Silver!—is the executive producer, and William Teitler is the producer! He was in a wormy Winnebago when I backed him up against a rancid wall!

It did my hole-ridden heart good to hear Teitler, late of *Tales from the Darkside*, tell me, "It happens all the time that people say, 'Boy, I can remember this story when I was a kid, it scared the hell out of me.' I had a great experience the other day when I was going to Walter's office at Carolco, and a security guard, who must have been in his mid-40s, saw the *Tales* from the Crypt folder, and said, 'Wow, *Tales* from the Crypt! I can remember that from when I was a kid.' And he started telling me about some story he remembered."

I put away my skinning knife when Teitler caught his breath and actually talked about me! "The Crypt-Keeper is a very important element of the show, because he's our continuing character and will embody all the show's characteristics. He's funny, he's vicious, he's violent, he's insane, he's horrible, but he's our guy, our main man. Bob Zemeckis had a great description of him. 'a cross between Peter Lorre and Charles Manson.'" I always felt more like a batty blend of Laurence Olivier and Boris Karloff, but hey, I know a compliment when I hear one!

Leaving this flattering freak behind, ol' C.K. went in search of the kid, Kevin Yagher, who made one of my favorite monsters, *Chuckie the doll* in last year's *Child's Play*! After all, this 26-year-old monster maven is the guy who's going to make yours truly live, in a manner of speaking, as the host of these shudder shows!

Kevin Yagher has only been dipping his



hands into latex and running wires up the rears of puppets for six years—and here he is in charge of me! All by chance, too, Yagher says! "Joel Silver has a storage unit across from me in Glendale. He would drive by and see monsters through the open garage door. He would stop by and look around, and we would chat. He told me he had this project, *Tales from the Crypt*; one thing led to another, we had a couple of meetings on it, and I took the job. It's low budget, but I'm working with tremendously talented people. It's an opportunity that I couldn't pass by. Plus, the possibility of directing was in the package. I'm directing the wraparounds,

there's a teaser and a tag, beginning and the end of every show. I may be directing an episode later."

Never having directed before, Yagher admits he did have a few bats, er, butterflies in his stomach! "I thought Donner was going to be there the first day, to at least get me through this opening shot. Then, he said, 'Good luck, kid.' I said, 'Uh, Dick, you're going to be here tomorrow, aren't you?' 'Nah, I'm gonna go on vacation. You're on your own, pal. You'll do it, you'll be great.' He slaps me on the back and he's out the door. Urine is running down my leg and onto the floor at this point. I didn't sleep the night before; I

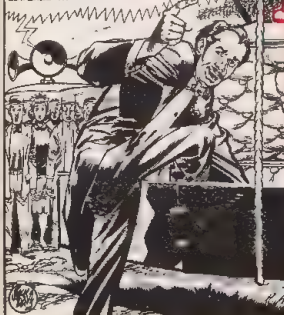
All EC Comics Art & Host Characters: Copyright 1979, 1988 William M. Gaines

All *Tales from the Crypt* Photos: Courtesy HBO

"Dig That Cat, He's Real Gone!" Kill him once, twice, three times, it don't matter. Joe Pantalio has a pesky feline's disrespect for death. It's right out of *The Haunt of Fear* #21.

ULRIG, THE UNDYING, BOWED STIFFLY TO THE CHEERING CROWD, AND STEPPED GINGERLY INTO THE SATIN-LINED CASKET THAT RESTED, SUSPENDED, OVER THE YAWNING TEN-FOOT-DEEP PIT. A HUGE FELL OVER THE GATHERING OF THE CURIOUS THAT HAD COME TO WITNESS ULRIG'S LATEST SURREALISM WITH DEATH. A VOICE ECHOED OVER A LOUDSPEAKER...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ULRIG, THE UNDYING, IS GETTING INTO THE COFFIN NOW. IN A MOMENT, ITS LID WILL BE SEALED AND IT WILL BE LOWERED INTO THE GRAVE...



Art: Jack Davis

lay there, checking the clock. Yesterday, when I did the first one, I was a little bit spooked. When we got through that, everything started to calm me down."

I thought I would be played by Awful Al Pacino, but no! I'm wire and rubber! "When I started the show, we talked about using a puppet, we talked about makeup, we talked about a mechanical mask, a Harry and the Hendersons type of thing. We decided that we wanted something so skinny and emaciated that it couldn't possibly be a human being. We have these rotted holes in his leg, and we have mechanical hands with holes all the way through them so you can see light through them, which I'll somehow sneak into one of these wraparounds. I couldn't go as elaborately as I did with Chucky because it took three-and-a-half months to build that one, and I had 10 weeks to build this one. The Crypt-Keeper had to be all rod puppet and cables. The only thing radio-controlled on it is the facial stuff."

Yagher himself was an EC fan-addict! "I grew up on EC Comics. I grew up in the '60s, but they were around when I was a kid. My brother [now an actor] would go buy the Warren publications and the EC comics. He would spend all his money on them, and I didn't have to do anything. I would read them after he would put them down; they would get old and tattered." Much like the books' hosts!

And speaking of witch, er, which! "The Old Witch was the only really creepy-looking one," Yagher says, "but then that's a witch, and I didn't want to do a



Photo: Sam Emman

witch. The other two were just guys with slime in their mouths. I thought that was boring. I would describe him as an insane dead warlock." I always thought of myself as a leering librarian, but whatever! Ack! Ptui! There goes a wad of slime!

As for my vile voice, when Charles Fleischer wanted too much money, Yagher got to pick out the right guy! "I had seven or eight people come into the shop one day, including Rick Overton and Michael Winslow, who does all the noises in *Police Academy*. John Kassir came in, and I knew at once, that from amongst the seven I had to choose from, he was it. What sold me is his cackle, which is going to be the Crypt-Keeper's trademark."

Yagher was still squeaking when I walked him up and headed in search of The Crypt itself! Dear readers, this place is the bat's pajamas! I wriggled so hard in joy that my left ear fell off! Jack DeGovia, the designer, created a set that Ghastly Graham Angels would have felt right at home in! Skeletons dangle from the ceiling, there are plenty of stalagmites and stalactites; screaming, distorted faces writhe in the cornices above the curving pillar-tops! Coffins and tombs abound! Statuary! Rats! Bats! Spiders! I moved right in! Come visit! Of course, I don't look quite the same these days, but you'll know me by my—heh! heh!—sunny personality!

DeGovia didn't do the rest of the designs, though! That was Ginny Randolph, listed as visual consultant! She's trying to keep a comic-book look, she

(continued on page 60)

You'd better pout, you'd better cry! I'm tellin' you why, watch our show or I'll send Santa to your town!



Art: Jack Davis



Photo: Bernard Fallon



Welcome to HAWKWORLD

His spirit soaring, Tim Truman watches as his tribute to Gardner Fox takes wing.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

If the new *Hawkworld* series reminds readers of the classic Gardner Fox/Joe Kubert Hawkman stories, it's all right with writer/penciller Timothy Truman.

But its creator sees the three-issue Prestige Format DC title as being closer to "a cyberpunk version of Edgar Rice Burroughs, with a soundtrack by Keith Richards! It's real grimy and grungy and funky, but it still has swashbuckling aspects and an alien urban feel that I haven't been able to do since *Grimjack*."

"I'm not much on superhero concepts," Truman admits. "I never followed characters, I always followed artists. Hawkman is fun science fiction, he's like Tommy Tomorrow and characters like that. It didn't pretend to be anything other than what it was."

"He also had one of the best-looking

costumes in comics. He didn't look like a superhero, he looked like a barbarian, and I've always liked fantasy and SF."

"Hawkman is part of a stable of characters who are marketed toward children. Most of the things I'm doing here are not too different from the stuff I do for the independents—which is more gutsy and horrific—but I still wanted something I could hand to an adolescent and not worry too much about it, something that anybody could enjoy." Notes Truman, "I'm not out to win a Nebula with this, but I am out to commit a good piece of entertainment to paper!"

Hawkworld was actually formed years ago, when it was conceived as a collaboration between Truman and his hero, the late writer Gardner Fox. One of Fox's Kothar books first introduced Truman to



fantasy and SF when he was 12 years old. Later, when Truman was a staff illustrator at TSR, he met Fox at a Gencon gaming convention. He introduced himself to the author and his wife, chatted for a few minutes, and gave Fox one of his prints.

A letter from Fox soon followed, and the two struck up a correspondence. Truman told him about the rise of independent publishers and creators' rights, and, laughs the artist, "I talked Gardner Fox out of retirement!"

The pair began working on Fox's Daral the Barbarian for Pacific Comics, which eventually saw print in *Eclipse's* *Killer* after Pacific folded, but other projects prevented further collaborations. The two discussed doing something in the vein of Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter of Mars, when Truman recalled doing a sketch of Hawkman at a Chicago con.

"It felt natural to draw the character," Truman says. "I decked him out in all of





these ancient weapons and he was splattered with blood—a very barbaric Hawkman. On the basis of that one drawing, it seemed like I could do some very moody, dark things with Hawkman.”

However, Truman was busy starting Scout (CS #5) at the time, and he and Fox were never able to get their Hawkman project off the ground. “I had come up with the idea of having these three-mile high towers, and having all of the dignitaries dressed up in different bird masks representing different categories of administration: owls would be judges, hawks would be policemen, etc. Gar just loved that, and said he had worked up a couple of notes.”

When Truman had some free time coming up, he sat down to write a letter to Fox around Christmastime, suggesting that the time was right to begin work on their Hawkman.

“I later found out that the night I was writing that letter, Gar had died,”

Hawk Police swoop down on their prey, but as Katar Hol will discover, these fine featherless fiends aren't the real evil menacing Hawkworld.



Truman says sadly, noting that Fox had died before they could discuss his ideas for the series. But Truman was determined to complete the story for his friend.

“I felt I owed it to him in a big way. He was one of the most favorite people I have ever met, and most of his attitudes have influenced mine. He and the ‘old guard’ didn’t have these Hollywood airs some writers and artists have today. They never got too big for their britches!”

Citing his admiration for the cyberpunk movement in recent science-fiction literature, Truman admits his Hawkman is probably quite different from what Fox would have come up with. “Since its early genesis as an Edgar Rice Burroughs swashbuckler, my version of Hawkman has taken on a darker tone with more meat to him. I would have loved to have seen what Gar had worked up, but it would have been a much different story. Gar realized that the audience he was writing for at the time he was doing Hawkman was basically a children’s audience,” says Truman, pointing out that his work on independent comics has caused the project to take a more serious, more mature attitude.

“I wanted adolescents and adults both to be able to read and enjoy it. I’m paying tribute to both camps!”





Truman's Thanagarians build their nests in immense, "three-mile high towers."

Hawkman's origin is revised somewhat in *Hawkworld*, thanks to Truman's being able to take more liberties within the Prestige Format.

"I loved those old Hawkman stories, but for a '90s audience, there's some stuff I just downright messed with in trying to humanize the characters. Gar and John Broome were great entertainment writers, but this is a different concept and look. Some real surprising stuff happens, particularly with Shayera and with Katar's father, whose role in the comics was always that of an elder mentor who didn't really do much.

"Katar Hol was always a policeman, so I started developing this urban police story in the first issue. I throw him in as a new recruit who nobody really likes very much, because he has a very famous father and they think he's slumming. The original always carried around archaic weaponry without much explanation; here, Katar is a historian and history collector, which is why he was interested in getting a job as a museum curator on Earth.

"He's obsessed with the legends of Kalmoran. There's this statue of him in the original series that's only there for a couple of panels I've used Kalmoran through all three of these books, as a person who Katar always aspires to be." Explains the writer/artist, "*Hawkworld* is about Katar becoming a hero."

The first book, Truman reveals, details the fledgling Hawkman's descent into disillusionment. "At the beginning, Katar is not a very likable person, and he's very naive. There's all this corruption in the world around him, and things aren't as he

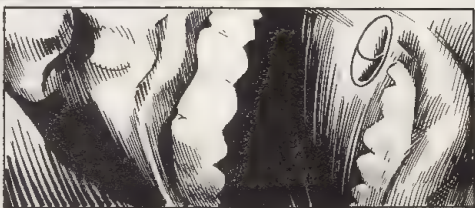
(continued on page 66)



Birds of a fearsome feather, the Hawk Police flock together to protect Thanagar.



With all his troubles coming home to roost, Katar Hol turns to drugs.



"LET'S GO TO A PARTY..."



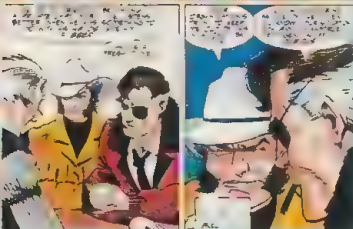
Snarling and hungry, a new "Wolverine" bred by Archie Goodwin prepares to capture his prey.

Wolverine. He's a berserker with a samurai code of honor, a noble spirit whose dark side is never far from the surface. He's also a living weapon, one of Marvel's deadliest heroes and a survivor of some of the most awesome odds ever to face a comics character.

And he'll be facing even greater challenges once Archie Goodwin takes over as writer on the hero's regular monthly series. But Goodwin's involvement doesn't end there. His collaboration with artist Howard Chaykin debuts this summer, and although Goodwin has left Marvel's Epic line to join DC Comics,

Art: John Byrne

**CLAWS
UNSHEATHED**



In the graphic novel, a common goal makes uneasy allies of Wolverine and Nick Fury.

he still plans on seeing the mutant through a multi-part saga beginning this Fall.

"I'll be starting some things over with *Wolverine* #17," Goodwin says, "to the extent that I'll quickly re-establish the status quo in Madripoor, and how and why Wolverine goes there. Then, I move on to a new adventure involving some

characters from Madripoor, but my third issue moves Wolverine out of there."

Goodwin adds that Madripoor will always be Wolverine's favorite stomping ground. The supporting characters will remain in place for his appearances in the city, but the Canadian X-Man's adventures will soon become much more worldly.

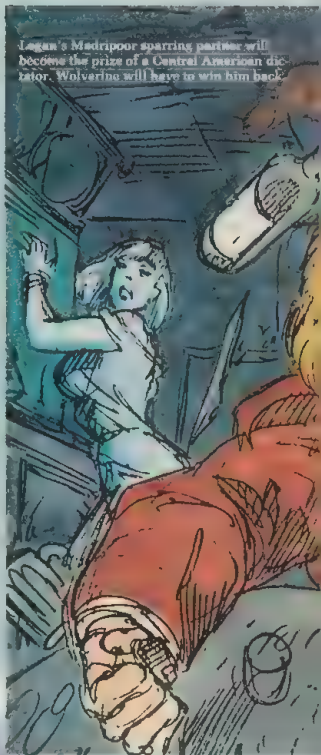
"I'm going to have Wolverine do a bit more globe-hopping, and the first thing he's involved in is heavily centered around Central America," Goodwin says. "There's a Noriega-like dictator there, a former Nazi who's a cyborg and U.S. involvement in Central American affairs."

One of Wolverine's Madripoor-based enemies will be kidnapped and tortured in the name of science and patriotism. "Roughhouse is the victim of a very cruel experiment by the Central American dictator, who hopes to justify his rise to power as a drug smuggler and then a corrupt general by creating a superhero for his country," Goodwin explains. "Roughhouse becomes the object that they experiment upon, to see if the thing they found to give them a superhero can actually be made to work. And there's a lot wrong with it."

"Wolverine, partly because of his samurai code that you honor an enemy and a good opponent, feels obligated to save Roughhouse. As he goes along, he'll also get involved in attempts to overthrow the Central American dictator," Goodwin says. "He'll be involved in a personal vendetta against the cyborg, and there are

Art: John Byrne

While Wolverine goes globetrotting in his own title, he'll still remain part of *The Uncanny X-Men*, where "some wicked plans" are in store for him.



a couple of female characters, Sister Salvation and a freedom fighter called La Bandera [Spanish for "the flag"]."

Adventure isn't the only thing on Wolverine's horizon. Logan's personality will slowly be changing, as Goodwin engineers some alterations in the hero. "Basically, I want to gradually move Wolverine back to being more bestial," Goodwin says. "I'm certainly going to be playing with that. His fears are of becoming more of a beast and yet events will probably turn him into one."

But Goodwin is quick to add that Wolverine won't merely slip back to his early X-Men days, when he was known to be an unstable killer.

"He will slip way back," Goodwin says. "It'll take quite a while before that happens. We set it up early on, where we have Wolverine hunting wild game for food. We set this up as his signal to know when to go to Madripoor; when he feels himself giving in to his animal side, he needs to get away from his family [the X-Men], and let the wild side out. Madripoor is where he feels he can give the wild side a little bit of leash."



Art: John Byrne

Unfortunately for Wolverine, his wild side is pretty intense, and letting it out at all may mean trouble for everyone.

"He begins to worry that once the leash is out a ways, it's very hard to retract it. It'll be an ongoing and justifiable concern," Goodwin reveals. "When it happens, he won't say, 'My God, what have I done?' He'll know and many other people will know, too."

The challenge for Goodwin is dovetailing his plots with Chris Claremont's X-Men storylines.

"For the next [few months], my continuity will precede most of what happens with Wolverine in *The X-Men*," Goodwin explains. However, he insists that the feral mutant won't be absent from the group. "Wolverine's going to be a vital part of the team and Chris has some wicked plans for him as well."

Nor will the opportunities for mutant byplay end there. "Maybe I can have some X-Men or former X-Men in with my continuity," Goodwin muses. "I'll also be trying to have appearances by more Marvel Universe characters in general. In our first issue, Daredevil appears."

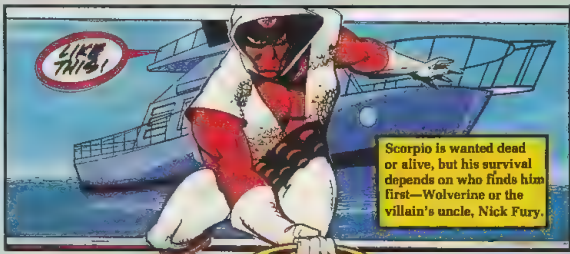
Goodwin is also enthusiastic over his artist for the series: John Byrne.

"I've got all these grand plans and everything. One of the things I'm not doing yet but hope to do—is take advantage of more of John Byrne's ideas," Goodwin says. "It's kind of stupid of me to have this guy who has all these great instincts for doing superhero comics and not get more of his input."

Surprisingly, Goodwin wasn't sure when he took on the assignment just who

would be pencilling the book.

"I didn't know if John Buscema was going to stay on. Byrne wasn't even a possibility, and then we found that they wanted to have Wolverine in the *Marvel Comics Presents* bi-weekly more frequently. Those deadlines are so crucial, though, that we felt John Buscema would be great doing the Wolverine stuff in there because John Buscema is like a rock. Besides being a really terrific artist, he's one of the most dependable."



Art: Howard Chaykin



Despite S.H.I.E.L.D.'s operative fashion sense, Logan will be appearing in costume.

looking for Scorpio for his own reasons.

"Nick Fury wants to get him and find out who he is, because Scorpio was Fury's brother. To the best of Fury's knowledge, his brother is dead. It turns out the new Scorpio is his brother's son," Goodwin explains. "This puts Nick in a strange position: He feels guilt over his brother's suicide, so he would like to save the boy if he can. Wolverine would like not to save him. The two are working together, but it's an agreed-upon truce. Fury is torn between duty to S.H.I.E.L.D. and duty to family, and by what's going to happen when they find Scorpio."

Goodwin says the three-way resolution should surprise readers while unveiling some major character revelations. "This novel will have implications that will have to be dealt with later on in S.H.I.E.L.D. as it goes along," he observes.

The writer praises Chaykin highly for his work on the graphic novel.

"I love his Nick Fury," Goodwin says. As for the artist's version of Wolverine, "Howard does a really tremendous, great looking Logan, to the point that I almost hated it when he actually got into his costume—but then, Howard does a great Wolverine in costume, too."

Goodwin's recent collaborations with Chaykin and Byrne illustrate two kinds of writer-artist relationships.

"It all depends on who the artist is and where the artist's interests lie," Goodwin says. "Some like having a full script, some, a detailed plotline, other artists like to have a great deal of input. Depending on the artist and what their feelings are, it changes how I work enormously. Howard took my synopsis of the graphic novel; he had some suggestions for things he thought wouldn't work, he would also find places where what was in there might work but there wasn't room to draw it. I would suggest dropping material or scene shifts to give him room to accommodate things more."

"With John Byrne, I was already starting into this before I knew John was involved, so I had a fairly firm direction for where I wanted to go. I'm probably giving John much more detail than he needs. I'm not taking full advantage of John yet, but I hope to lean on him a bit more as things go along."

Goodwin is delighted to be working with a character so popular yet still retaining such an air of mystery, all of which he credits to Chris Claremont.

"[Wolverine's success] owes a lot to the way Chris keeps inventing new aspects of the character, new situations, sometimes even whole new identities."

His popularity may be tested this year as an abundance of Wolverine adventures fill comics shelves. However, Archie Goodwin doesn't see that as a problem. "There doesn't seem to be any way we've approached the limit with Wolverine," the writer says. "People just can't seem to get enough of him."



If things go according to plan, Arcade may think twice about antagonizing the more primal mutant.

Goodwin is also enthusiastic about another artist who's just finishing the writer's major summer project. It's a book that was literally years in the making.

After plotting a Nick Fury/Wolverine story for Rich Buckler to pencil, Goodwin found their schedules weren't working out and so the project was shelved, awaiting another artist. He discussed it with Walt Simonson (page 49), who, in turn, mentioned it to Howard Chaykin.

"Chaykin jumped in and over the course of about a month roughly laid out the graphic novel with me, then he waited for years for the script to be done on it," Goodwin says. "Last year, I finally got the script done, after having to hide from Howard for several years, ducking him at conventions."

Their graphic novel collaboration focuses on the return of Scorpio, one of Nick Fury's most deadly enemies from the classic S.H.I.E.L.D. series. While making his comeback, Scorpio kills a person who once saved Wolverine's life. This brings Logan together with Fury, who is

Peter & The Wolverine

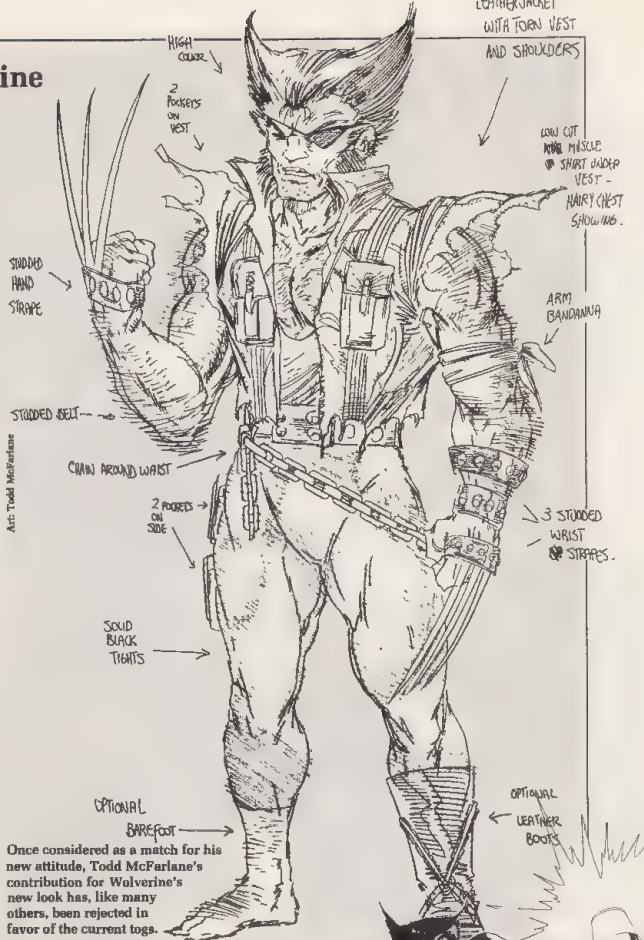
Before Archie Goodwin and John Byrne take over the creative chores on *Wolverine*, Incredible Hulk author Peter David will have a six-issue run on the book, starting with issue #11. That issue will also mark the title's move to bi-weekly status for the summer.

"Issues #11-16 will be a rock-'em, sock-'em, action-packed adventure called 'The Gehenna Stone Affair,'" says David, who will be joined by artists John Buscema and Bill Sienkiewicz for the multi-parter. "I guess the best way I can describe is that it's like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom Meets Rain Man*. The story's premise takes place over 1,000 years ago in a place called Gehenna, where this evil figure named Ba'al dwells. God looked down and created a warrior to destroy Ba'al. The two fight, and the warrior defeats him. Just before he's destroyed, however, Ba'al transfers his spirit into a large stone. The stone is smashed into pieces and scattered throughout the world so that Ba'al can never return.

"Now, we're in the present, and most of the stone's pieces have been found and reassembled," he adds. "Only two more pieces are needed to make the stone whole again and return Ba'al to life. The search for the missing pieces leads us to Archie Corrigan's brother Burt, who's a bit on the eccentric side. Archie is on his way to San Francisco to attend a hearing over whether or not Burt should be committed, and he finagles Wolverine into coming along with him. During the hearing, Burt bursts into the courtroom and screams that a bunch of vampiric monsters are after him. Everyone but Wolverine is convinced that Burt has gone off the deep end when suddenly, a bunch of vampiric monsters burst in to the courtroom. Then, it gets interesting."

In addition to his six-issue stint and two fill-in issues on the title (one has already seen print with issue #9), the scribe will re-team with former Hulk artist Todd McFarlane for an eight-part *Wolverine* story in *Marvel Comics Presents*. "I will introduce the only villain that Wolverine will ever be close to being scared of," David says. "His name's Cyber, and he has adamantium-laced skin. He was created by the same people who created Wolverine, who he nearly killed a long time ago. Now, he has returned, and Wolverine must confront his fears and face the one man who has haunted him all these years.

"What I also intend to do with *Wolverine* is to bring back his X-Men costume and answer what is probably the single most-asked question," he explains, "which is why no one can



Once considered as a match for his new attitude, Todd McFarlane's contribution for Wolverine's new look has, like many others, been rejected in favor of the current toga.

recognize Patch. After all, here are people he has known for years and worked alongside with in the past, especially Karma. So, why doesn't anyone recognize him? It can't just be the patch over his eye, and his face doesn't blur or anything like that. Therefore, I think I've come up with an answer that will best explain it."

David admits his interpretation of the character isn't much different from Chris Claremont's. "While I will try to concentrate on his tactile senses much more," the writer notes, "I want to stay close to Claremont's version, which is basically that Wolverine's a smart-ass. He's very smart, and very nasty."

—Michael McAvennie

Art: Kevin Nguyen

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Writes of Passage

Marv Wolfman
& George Perez
are raising the
"Teen Titans"
to young
adulthood.

series co-creator George Perez, Wolfman has already begun work on restoring the Titans to their former stature. In the coming months, the Titans, a team of teens no longer, will have to face not only the return of the wily *Wildebeest*, who "comes back in a very bizarre fashion," but the coming of responsibilities long ignored and a maturity long held at bay.

"It has been a real effort to not only make the book work again, but to get back to where the characters should be and then proceed from there," says the scribe. "They're really good characters, and their personalities work well in tandem. But when we sat down and created them, we made them as real as we could, and therefore they still have all these dimensions that we haven't even come close to exploring yet."

And so Dick Grayson, for example, will begin re-investigating himself after a case alongside the *Darknight Detective* causes him to re-examine the facts of *Batman: Year Three* (now on sale). However, the only solution he can see to this personal mystery will hardly be one unsuspecting readers would deduce.

"Dick is quitting," the writer reveals, "based on what happened with Jason Todd. You can't have a character like Jason killed in the way he was without affecting everyone down the line who's connected in one way or another to Batman." Grayson's resignation from costumed crime-fighting will unfold over the course of "a five-part crossover with *Batman*. What occurs in the pages of this is fairly monumental. George and I are co-plotting it. George is drawing the three *Titans* chapters, and Jim Aparo is drawing the two *Batman* chapters. More than that, I can't say."

At press time, one of Grayson's last official acts as both *Nightwing* and a *Titan* was to arrange Danny Chase's removal from the group and, to their great relief, the readers' eyes.

"Danny was fired essentially because



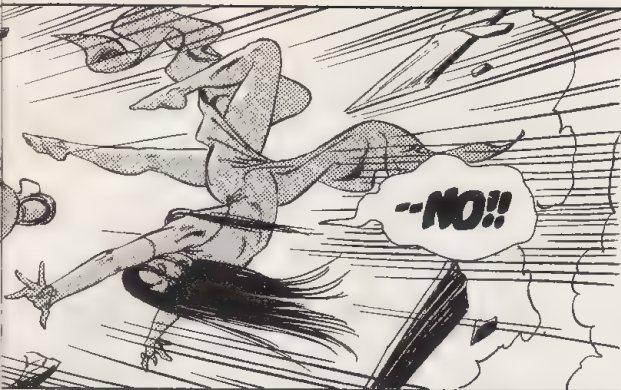
Art: Tom Grummett/George Perez

When Marv Wolfman first moved *The New Teen Titans* into their glittering New York headquarters, he saw only a future for the young adventurers as bright as the sunlight glinting off the Titans Tower's steel frame. Yet years later, even Wolfman will admit that there have been times when the band of heroes seemed less eager to strive for their full potential and their tower less likely to glitter in the distance, and like any dismayed and distraught parent, the writer faults only himself.

"If *Titans* was hurting for a while, it's because I wasn't doing as many stories about the people," Wolfman admits. "Un-

til I got out of my writer's block, I was doing more adventures of the Titans. It was much easier to just come up with plots and plug the characters in. That hurt the book, and I wasn't happy with it. Also, I got off it for several months because I just didn't like the direction in which I was going. When I came back, I started doing more people-oriented stories, and they were successful because those stories are the ones that you care about. You don't care, at least I don't, who's going to take over the world this issue. I don't know if the fans care, either—not when there are 300 other books with people taking over the world as well."

Reunited since *New Titans* #50 with



Jason Todd [Robin] died. Dick decided he didn't want a little kid in the group, especially one who doesn't listen; Jason didn't listen and he died.

"And just in case any of the fans say, 'Oh, George finally got Marv to do it,' George will be the first to admit it was my concept to get Danny out for a few months," Wolfman remarks. "George has asked me several times when I want him back, and I want him back when the story warrants it. Danny will grow up. When he comes back, he won't be so changed that people will suddenly love him. He'll still be obnoxious because that's part of his personality, but he'll be a slightly different character."

The usually cheerful Changeling has also found his crimebusting career curtailed somewhat since he was forced into taking up a different sort of challenge,

Something more threatening than this awaits Raven. "She has to face the real world," says the scribe. "This is the first time she has ever had emotions, and now she has to live."

EVERYONE'S TRIED TO HELP ME, EXCEPT ME

THEN WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

"WHAT I HAVE TO DO"



KORY AND I TALKED OUT OUR PROBLEMS, AND DESPITE HOW HARD THAT WAS, TALKING MADE IT BETTER

I GUESS I'VE GOT NO CHOICE

"I'VE GOT TO SEE BRUCE."



"NO MATTER HOW PAINFUL, IT MIGHT GET"



"Dick Grayson has quit, so he's not quite sure what's going on," explains Wolfman. Can his mysterious mentor provide a clue?

one that doesn't require him to expend his animalistic energies. Rather than fighting fiends, he's hitting books.

"His grades have gone to hell, and his father's not putting up with it anymore," the scribe explains. "He does have to go to school. The others have excuses; they're adults. But when you're 16 or 17, you have no choice."

"Meanwhile, Raven is going to begin a search for her mother, which she hasn't done at all since they came back in the first five issues of the offset book. That means for 55 issues, or four-and-a-half years, her mother has been circulating and she hasn't found out where. So, we'll be dealing with that."

tions, and we're still playing around with some of them."

And as for Cyborg, the gadget-ridden gladiator will become one of the most valuable players in a series of *Games* in which the Titans will have little choice about participating. Ironically, it was discussing the strategies they would use in this project, a graphic novel not due to reach store shelves for at least another year, that proved to be what drew artist George Perez back to the series he helped develop.

"It's hard to explain the graphic novel. It's one of the strongest superhero stories we've ever done, but it also goes from humor to science fiction to horror to so

Art: George Perez

Soon, even his fans won't like what they see in Jericho's eyes.

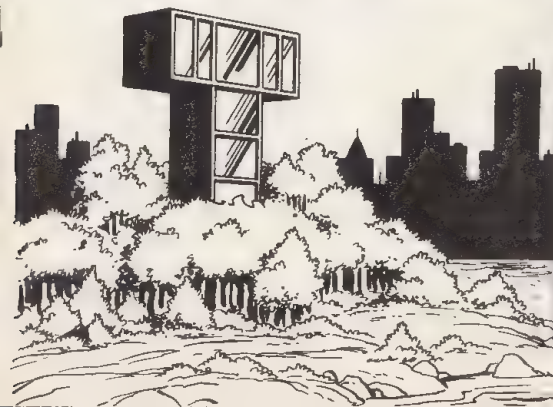


The wascally Wüdebeest is back, but beware. "Whatever you think he's doing is exactly the opposite of what he's actually doing," Wolfman reveals. *TM*



Art: George Perez

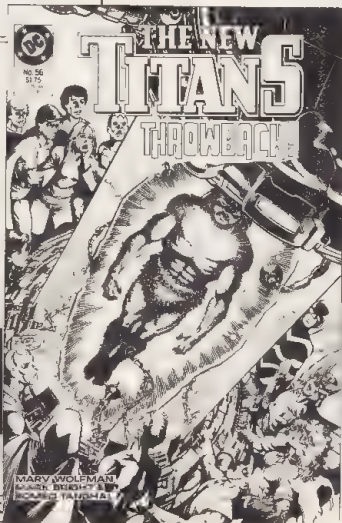
George Perez actually worked out this adventure of the teen Titans, but that's OK with Wolfman. "Since Jack Kirby, George is the best plotting artist I've ever come across," the writer remarks.



many subjects, it's unbelievable. It's really impossible to describe," stresses Wolfman, outside of the fact that Perez will paint it himself. "It was the first time we got back together after a while, and it was like all the energy we had had previously was in that meeting. I had a rough idea, but when we sat down together, it just kept growing. It's everything we ever wanted to do with the Titans. I'm not sure how long it's going to be, but George rough laid it out at 120 pages. When we were finished with it, we were absolutely exhausted, and I think working on that is what prompted George to do the book itself because we found the chemistry is still there."

The individual elements, however, are no longer mixed together in quite the same proportions. When Wolfman and Perez began their partnership, the writer preferred to do all the plotting himself, but upon discovering what "a phenomenal character person George is," the pair began to more evenly share that chore for the remainder of their run.

"These days, George is slightly more responsible for the specific plotting," Wolfman confesses. With the exception of Games and this year's annuals (Wolfman will permanently eclipse the Children of the Sun in one, while Perez reveals the Secret Origins of the group in another), "we discuss the direction of the characters and the overall concepts that we want to do, and then George takes it and plays with it. I'll go through it and say, 'No, I think it should be a little bit more this way,' and I'll write it that way, or I'll follow what he does. So, right now, we're working it where I come into New, we're working it where I come into New (continued on page 66)



Art: Tom Greaves/Walk, Wolfman



The Bat Man Time Forgot

His dark,
wing-like cape
also terrified
criminals in 1939,
but who fears the
Black Bat today?

By WILL MURRAY

When Bob Kane and Bill Finger labored over the creation of the Batman one weekend early in 1939, they little dreamed that a prolific pulp writer was simultaneously hard at work on a new series of novels featuring a character who would be a virtual mirror image of their own. And had they known, they might have been forced to junk their seminal creation and literally go back to the drawing board for an entirely different concept.

In an industry that has seen many uncanny creative coincidences, the twin sagas of the Batman and the Black Bat

must be the most incredible.

One of the most popular pulp series of the 1940s, the Black Bat has been forgotten by all but ardent pulp collectors—and his creator. One of the most prolific writers of pulp heroes in the tradition of The Shadow, Norman A. Daniels has been erroneously credited with ghost writing Doc Savage, a series he says he had nothing to do with. But as a freelancer for Leo Margulies' Better Publications, Daniels often penned the

exploits of their most famous character, the Phantom Detective, and created others like the Masked Detective and the Crimson Mask, all under pen names.

"There was hardly any difference between them," says the 84-year-old Daniels, now retired and living in California. "The Phantom was a little bit different. It wasn't quite as fantastic."

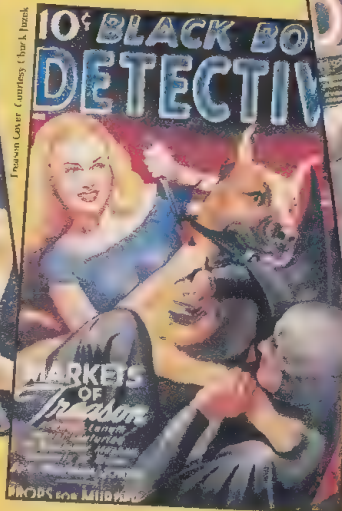
In 1938, despite growing competition from comic books, pulp heroes were still the rage and publishers busily competed to create new ones.

"Leo asked me to think of something to compete with *The Shadow*," Daniels recalls. "I came up with this character I

Marked Man Cover Courtesy Doug Ellis



Crushing Nazi spies wasn't enough for the Black Bat. After the war, he literally conquered Germany.



That other caped crusader may have beaten him to print, but the Black Bat was always quicker on the draw.

called the Tiger because in the initial episode, the hero had been doused with acid. His face was lined like a tiger's."

Daniels' new character was District Attorney Tony Quinn—this was before the famous actor of the same name—who, after losing his sight and suffering tiger-stripe scars around his eyes, goes into seclusion. A mysterious woman offers him an opportunity to regain his sight and get back at the criminals who blinded him. Quinn agrees to an experimental eye transplant. When he emerges from the operation, Quinn discovers that his new eyes give him catlike night vision. Donning black clothing and a black hood to hide those telltale scars, he straps a pair of automatics on his hips and goes after his tormentors.

Leo Margulies liked Daniels' first novel, but he demanded one minor but very fateful revision.

"He wanted to change the Tiger to the Black Bat because he wanted it to go into Black Book Detective magazine," Daniels says.

Margulies might have been thinking of the Bat, a bat-cloaked villain that the Phantom Detective fought only months beforehand. But his inspiration was probably a failed hero called The Bat which Margulies had published in *Popular Detective* back in 1934. That Bat was private detective Dawson Glade who, framed for a murder and "executed" in an inoperable electric chair, retreats to a secluded woodland cabin to plan how to strike back at crime now that he's officially dead. When the shadow of a trapped bat appears on the wall, Glade has an in-

Thanks to Lt. McGrath's training, this dog was hardly the Black Bat's best friend.

spiration identical to the one that would seize Bruce Wayne five years later, prompting Glade to cry, "That's it! I'll call myself The Bat." (Wayne's exclamation was, "A bat! That's it! It's an omen... I shall become a bat!")

Dressed in a business suit, this Bat wore a sacklike black hood with a white bat symbol on his forehead. He carried a gas gun and left bat stickers at the scenes of his depredations. His career spanned only four novelettes, each one bylined C.K.M. Scanlon. It's believed that this house pseudonym hid no less than Johnston McCulley, Zorro's famous creator.

Whatever triggered Margulies' suggestion, Daniels' novel was swiftly retitled *Brand of the Black Bat* and the Tiger was changed to the Black Bat. His "catlike" eyes became his "batlike" eyes. And the scene where Quinn explains how he intends to get back at Oliver Sate, the criminal mastermind who ruined his face, was rewritten.

"I want people to think I'm helpless and that I haven't enough interest in life to even have my features mended," Quinn tells his valet, "Silk" Kirby. "We'll operate anonymously. No one must know who we are. I'll have to wear a mask, of course—a complete hood, I suppose, if my features are as bad as that doctor said they were."

"Yes, sir," Kirby nodded, "it will have to be a hood. I'll make one, sir, of silk. Black silk, that can't be seen in the night. You can dress in black and be nothing more than a dim shadow in the darkness."

"But there must be some means of identification," Quinn pursed his lips. "Something by which men can recognize me. An insignia—a name, Silk—I have it! I've been blind as blind as a bat. I am still, so far as anyone knows. I shall prowl during the night. Bats are blind and fly by night. I'll be the bat. Silk. The Black Bat!"

Today, Daniels no longer remembers if he made those revisions or if they were undertaken by some anonymous copy editor. But of one fact, he is certain.

"We were the first," he chuckles.

Technically, Daniels is correct. His personal payment records indicate that he was paid for *Brand of the Black Bat* on December 6, 1938—at least two months before Bob Kane created Batman in January 1939. However, Batman was the first character in print, debuting in *Detective Comics* #27, cover-dated May 1939. The Black Bat premiered in the July 1939 issue of *Black Book Detective*.

In keeping with Better Publications' house style, only the Black Bat's hooded face graced most *Black Book Detective* covers. Dressed in his all-black regalia of ribbed cloak and hood and clothes, he strongly resembled Batman. He lacked only a bat emblem on his chest and ears on his hood. Even so, in a dark alley, they could have passed for cousins.

This amazing resemblance hardly went

unnoticed in the editorial offices of Better Publications and DC Comics. As Batman's co-creator, the late Bill Finger, told Jim Steranko in his *History of Comics*, "There was a lawsuit almost pending. Apparently, this character had already been written and on the drawing board. Whit Ellsworth used to be a pulp writer for Better Publications So, through Ellsworth's intervention, a lawsuit was averted. They were ready to sue us and we were ready to sue them. It was just one of those wild coincidences."

Whitney Ellsworth was the first official *Batman* editor. He later hired one of the early *Black Bat* editors, Mort Weisinger, to replace him. One of the first *Batman* writers Weisinger hired was Charles Green, who had written *Phantom Detective* novels for him, including the one featuring the villainous Bat. In yet another twist, Weisinger later brought Jack Schiff over from *Better* to replace him on *Batman* when Weisinger was drafted. Schiff—who had edited the original *Bat* series in *Popular Detective*—was the man who gave Weisinger his first editorial job at *Better* back in 1933. None of these musical chair switches had anything to do with the creation of *Batman* or the *Black Bat*.

For his part, Daniels was unaware of the newly created legal collision. "I knew nothing about that," he states. "That was someone in the office. They never told me anything about it. They never asked my advice."

Both firms agreed to ignore the problem. *Batman* went on to great popularity. The *Black Bat's* success, while more modest, was nevertheless impressive by pulp magazine standards. He dominated *Black Book Detective* in stories such as *The Black Bat's Crusade*, *The Faceless Satan*, *The White Witch*, *Without Blood They Die* and 62 other novels. Daniels wrote all but seven of them.

The early *Black Bat* novels were in the classic pulp tradition. Quinn fought vicious master criminals and Nazi spies with his blazing automatics. Superstitious criminals brought him unlikely aid, and he believed he could fly. They cowered at the sight of his batlike outline, or at the bat stickers he put on the foreheads of criminals he destroyed. But Quinn's true nemesis was Police Lieutenant McGrath, who suspected Quinn's secret and kept trying to prove he could still see. No one, Quinn was aided by the trio of Silk Kirby, ex-copster Batan Leary and Carol Ballwin, the mysterious woman who gave Quinn back his sight. The transplanted eyes had belonged to her murdered police officer father, another victim of Oliver Snate.

As the years went on, and *Batman's* villains grew increasingly more bizarre, the *Black Bat's* foes became more realistic. Invisibles, crooks and voodoo masters like Dr. Zuro gave way to more plausible organized criminals. A turning point in the series was *Morlocks of*



Treason, where McGrath presents Quinn with a seeing-eye dog named Gwendolyn. Quinn learns the hard way that Gwen doesn't seem to be able to attack anyone wearing a batlike cape. And so, Quinn was forced to abandon his signature cloak.

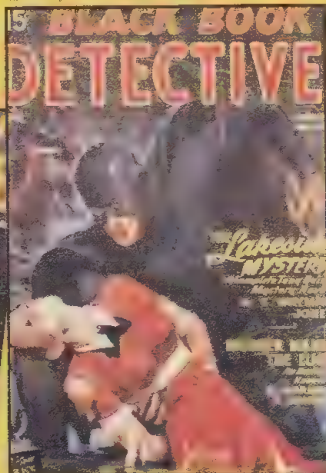
When *Black Book Detective* was cancelled in 1953, the *Black Bat* disappeared from American newsstands, and with his wife, Dorothy, Daniels turned to writing paperback books and never looked back. He was 74, but oblivious to *Batman's* continued success.

"I've never seen one," he says of the *Batman* comics. "I never had anything to do with them, and I never bothered with them."

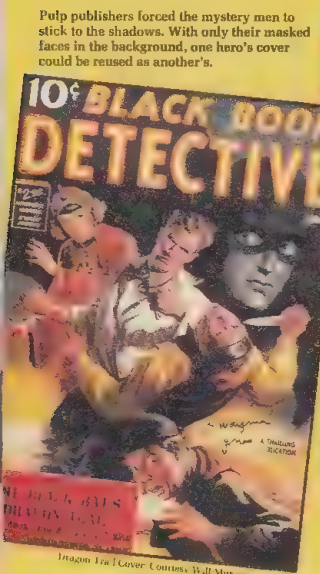
Neither does Daniels suffer any pangs of regret that it wasn't his character that went on to become a household word. And he makes surprisingly little of the marked similarities between the *Black Bat* and *Batman*.

"I can't see very much of a connection between the two," he generally allows. "I (continued on page 58)

Takeaway Mystery Cover. Courtesy: Chuck Jozak



Appearances to the contrary, *Black Bat's* creator Norman A. Daniels "can't see very much of a connection between" *Batman* and his own darknight detective.



Dragon Era I Cover. Courtesy: Will Murray



Missing Millions Cover. Rudolph Belarsky. Courtesy: Victor Borch

THOUGHT BALLOONS



Why I Want To Meet Batman

By ANDREW SEWARD, Editor of *Entertainment Weekly*

I would like to believe
that there exists
a man consumed
by an obsession

to exact a price from that which
took his humanity.

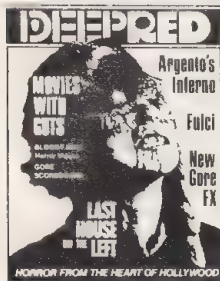
A lost soul amongst shadows.
A demon among men.
A hero to all that is evil.

"Hello again, Batsman... forever."

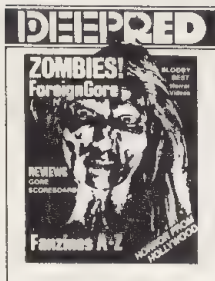
Quote from *Batman Anniversary Issue #400*

This is the amazing cover of the STARLOG COMICS SCENE featuring an artist's vision of the Batman set in November 1988. For a full report on his visit, see STARLOG YEARBOOK #5.

RED ALERT!



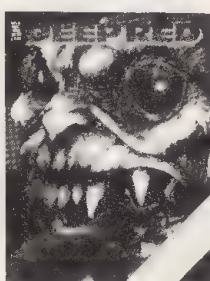
PREMIERE ISSUE! ★ ★ Argento's *INFERNO*/What Happened to Tobe Hooper/Interviews with David (LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT) Hess and James (RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD) Karen/Movies with Guts/News Slashes/Fulci's NEW YORK RIPPER/BLOOD DINER/ Gore Scoreboard/New FX Artists!



ISSUE 2 Foreign & Domestic Zombies/HELL RAISER/DOCTOR BUTCHER/Gunnar Hansen's Post-Chainaw Dating Etiquette/Interview with Mark (EVIL DEAD 2, FROM BEYOND) Shostrom/Fanzines A-Z/Sybil Danning/Video Dog House/Gore Scoreboard!



ISSUE 3 -- Full Color Cover/Exclusive 14 Page Interview with Tom Savini/In Depth Analysis of COMBAT SHOCK/New FX Artists/H.P. Lovecraft/Forrest J. Ackerman Interview/Uncut - SLAUGHTERHOUSE/Video Pick-O-The-Pack/Gore Scoreboard/Loaded with Rare Stills!



ISSUE 5 Full Color Cover/Censorship in Europe/Profile of John (GATES OF HELL, CANNIBAL FEROX) Marghen/Films of Peter Walker/Fanzine Updates/Horror Occurrites/LONG ISLAND CANNIBAL MASSACRE/Mark Williams FX/Gallery of Rare Ad Mats!



ISSUE 6 Full Color Cover/Steve Bissette Interview/Goblin's Splatter Soundtracks/ Directors' Forum/FantaCo Horror Con Coverage/NINTH & HELL STREET ex-cult/Splatter Art/Foreign Gore/Mass Horror/Gore Scoreboard/Bloody Bookshelf!



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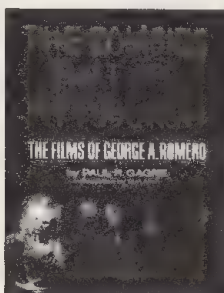
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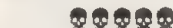
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LETTERING



WANTED!? MORE HEROES LIKE THE HUNTRESS. The new Huntress has her own comic book, but it was an earlier Huntress who prowled the backwoods of a NBC "comedy" special in 1978. Actress Barbara Joyce took up the *Challenge of the Superheroes* as the vengeful heroine.

Personal replies are impossible. Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To avoid this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish it. Write: COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr New York, NY 10016

.. While perusing my copy of COMICS SCENE #2, I came across a particularly ridiculous statement on page seven. In the article on *The Star Brand*, John Byrne says that when the *Star Brand* is passed on, only 90% of its power is transferred. This is fine; there is nothing wrong with this statement to and of itself.

What he says next is what is ridiculous. He says that the *Star Brand* had infinite power, and 90% of that was passed on to Ken Connell, and so on. This is mathematically absurd.

Infinity plus one is still infinity. Infinity minus a googol is infinity.

Infinity divided by pi is infinity. And finally, infinity times nine-tenths is still infinity. In other words, by the Byrne rationale, Ken Connell has infinite power, as does the baby *Star Brand*. I don't think this was Byrne's intention, he merely used the term "infinity" badly.

Christopher Hunt
9522 51st Avenue
College Park, MD 20740

No one around here ever said our strong suit was math.

..After reading COMICS SCENE #6, has any other reader but me noticed that the "Michael Keaton as *Batman*?" chorus has changed its tune to "How good is it going to be?"

After seeing the trailer, not to mention the behind-the-scenes documentary making the rounds at conventions, more people are beginning to see the film's quality putting their gripings and moanings to the wayside.

Regarding the rest of the film's set designs, costuming and effects—get ready to have a seizure.

Having read Sam Hamm's excellent three-part mini-saga currently in *Detective Comics* (#598-600), there's no doubt that the man knows how to write a *Batman* story. Also, floating around conventions are Sam Hamm's third draft script. With the exception that this story does introduce young Dick Grayson, this is going to be the hit movie this summer. The characterization is incredible, bringing *Batman* to his roots. If you want camp, this summer go to one because it's not in this movie!

Now, enough praise. Let's get to the criticism. As much as I love *Batman*, nothing's perfect.

As much as I know that Jack Nicholson is going to play a perfectly twisted Joker, I still feel that Sam Hamm was right in the idea that the Joker should be closer to *Batman*'s age. And there are several great younger actors who can play good psychopaths—Willem Dafoe and Tim Curry come instantly to mind.

The Joker is the Yang to *Batman*'s Yin. Somehow, the difference between Keaton and Nicholson's ages spreads the balance too much off-center. Not to mention that Nicholson would be sharing less screen time using a stunt double.

Doug Kelly
Tampa, FL

..The still of Michael Keaton "suited up" as *Batman* in that sinister outfit standing menacingly in front of the phallus-shaped *Batmobile* has become forever etched on my retinas—this obliquely lit shot of the ultimate nocturnal prowler has something so primordially awe-inspiring in it that one can almost feel the muscles bulging beneath the emblazoned *Bat*-insignia on the chest, and hear Keaton's ominous voice—"I'm *Batman*"—boom from deep within.

The new design of the *Batsuit* looks formidable indeed, and every bit as effective as I always conceived it to be; the credit of this task well-accomplished must foremostly go to Tim Burton himself, as well as the fabulously talented costume designer wizard Bob Ringwood, who has successfully married the classical comic-book design of Bob Kane's with his own distinctive "Ringwoodian touch" (there is something very reminiscent of *Dune*'s "stall suits" which he also envisioned), and added a most welcome dose of medieval "Gothic" inspiration from beyond the time of the Spanish Inquisition, which surely must have been an input of Tim Burton's own kitsch-aided imagination.

The new *Batmobile* is one of those mind-boggling designs that rivets you the first time your eye caresses its unshamedly erotic proportions; to my mind, this very special vehicle of *Batman*'s conjures up associations with several different versions of the Chevrolet Corvette, the megalomaniacal auto abominations of Detroit in the '50s and various elementary airplane technology imagery—the "cockpit" of the *Batmobile* is a very stylish example of this, and the sweeping, streamlined forms spreading away from the slightly obscene-looking rocket launcher at the front give this otherworldly automobile design some true character.

I'm confident that Michael Keaton, Jack Nicholson, Kim Basinger and the rest of the cast will give their utmost in their respective roles, and quite frankly I don't think that there is anything to worry about, as Bob Kane himself has blessed this project with his involvement, which has truly been "a labor of love" from the beginning.

Juhani Nurmi
Vaskite 6 B 21
SF-90250 Oulu 25
Finland

... Now that I've seen the *Batman* movie teaser innumerable times and seen still pictures of Michael Keaton in "uniform," it's time for my inevitable stream of comments. My theory about the success of *Batman* is that it's not the movie, but a bunch of us who keep going back to see the *Batman* teaser!

First up. The *Batsuit*. Yes, yes, yes! An unspoken thought I've had for a couple of years was in favor of an all-black suit. The grey would not be conducive to camouflaging the crimefighter in a dark alley. I never spoke this aloud for fear of hearing "Spidey did it first." This *Batsuit* looks more utilitarian and practical than any one conceived yet. It looks less like circus lights, as *Batman* has worn in the past, and more like a combat-ready battle outfit. I like it! The cape exceeds my wildest expectations! It actually billows and makes wings, just like it's supposed to. No beach towels here.

Next up: Michael Keaton looks fine, and seems to move well in the action sequences. Remember, a larger, more muscular guy would be less flexible and maneuverable. (Of course, Steven Segal is mean and lean as well.) Even the smirk evident on Keaton's face as he fires the grappling gun is more sardonic than anything, and certainly not whimsical as many people have been expecting. Jack Nicholson positively reeks of the malevolent, leering evil that is the Joker. He gives more to the character than I would have expected even from my choices (Tim Curry and Gene Simmons). The sets look sinister, murky and Gothic; just what was needed! The *Batmobile* is gorgeous. On first glance, I thought it was a Kung-fu car with its sneering, defiant air, and its burnished, gun-metal finish. What a touch! It took a work of genius to meld the Ferrarissime lines with the '40s-'50s car fins, not to mention the almost-Gigeresque lines that meld the mechanical with pseudo-organic. Time to gripe: I pictured Jim Gordon as the upright, correct, pipe-smoking fellow in the comics, not the paunchy, bulldog-faced man who looks more like a scruffy old police sergeant than a commissioner. (Sorry, Pat Hingle!) I had pictured maybe John Aniston in the part. (He plays Victor Kriakis in *Days of Our Lives*).

Btl Powell
4831 E. Summit Circle #106
Knoxville, TN 37919

...Now, about the subject of a Batsequel (or two), I personally would not want to see Robin brought back anew. I guess I really never cared too much for him. I've always seen Batman as a loner, although, I might not mind seeing a new Batgirl especially if they got Diane (Streets of Fire) Lane to play her. As for villains, I think the rumored story of Two-Face would be a mistake so soon after the Joker. I would also vote against the Penguin and Riddler. I would like to see the Catwoman though, especially after her mini-series. And for a third film, I would love to see a confrontation between Batman and, a personal favorite of mine, the sometime villain/some-time hero, Man-Bat!

I would though like to say a few things for Adam West. When the series was on, it was great. However, Adam West wouldn't have made a successful comeback as Batman. It worked then but wouldn't work now. Audiences are too sophisticated now. They expect realism. They expect Batman. Not West. He could have made his comeback with *Batman*. Not in the lead of course, but put some grey in his hair, add a moustache, and he would have made an excellent Commissioner Gordon.

Mark R. Daniels
Address Unknown

...Boy, those people who are making the new *Batman* movie are either quite ignorant or just plain dumb! Anyone who is familiar with the TV show knows that it was based on the comics at the time, which were the most juvenile and stupid of all. If anything, the *Batman* TV show was an improvement on the comics, which had lost the grimy film-noir atmosphere some 26 years since.

And as far as reality type deaths, Molly (Jill St. John), the Riddler's moll in the first episode, "Hi Diddle Riddle," "Smack in the Fiddle," took a fatal plunge in the Batcave's Atomic Pile Reactor. That sort of thing may mean nothing to adults, but for little kids, it's scary. Even a couple of episodes later, the Catwoman took a plunge off a hundred feet waterfall building after she lost her grip. I didn't know that *Batman* was camp, so I took it seriously, and when I saw her disappear off the side, I cried. The *Batman* TV show, in its first season and movie, were good. The humor and adventure blended well, and the directorial chores were far superior. The second season was less than fair, and the third was exactly like the comic of the time, a stupid, juvenile, embarrassing waste of time. Even Adam West says the quality had dropped.

I wish they had used Adam West. He is perfect for the part. He looks like Bruce Wayne, he was born to play *Batman*. And of course, Burt

Ward was born to play Robin/Dick Grayson. I wished they had used them for a film adaptation of the *Dark Knight Returns*, because that whole story was about an aged, drunken, retired *Batman* coming back into a new, technologically advanced world. Instead of a girl Robin, Burt Ward could come back.

Anyone familiar with the characters created by Bob Kane knows that Adam West and Burt Ward were born to play those roles and they were brilliant actors.

Christopher Krieg
5 Ruth Circle
Hampton, VA 23866

...It's the choice of Kim Basinger I don't like. I would prefer Catherine Hicks as Vicki or Karen Allen as Bruce Wayne's earlier love, Julie Madison. I can't believe Billy Dee Williams is Harvey Dent. I want Martin Sheen in that role. But Williams is a gifted actor, it'll work. But if a sequel is made, I wish the Riddler would be used. He's my favorite. James Woods would be great. If Catwoman is used, I can't think of anyone better than Kirstie Alley to play her.

Lindsay Malone
Address Withheld

...Last, but not least, the right musical accompaniment for *Batman* is definitely in order. No compilation of top-10 or wanna-be hit songs. No silly title themes with lyrics (Richard Donner's *Superman* movie didn't have one; this movie shouldn't have one either). There are several good candidates who could supply a well-arranged and composed, dramatic score that would enhance *Batman*.

F.F. Robinson
Address Withheld

Hopefully, Danny Elfman, Tim Burton's music man on both Pee-wee's Big Adventure and Beetlejuice, was on your hit list. And adding further to the feel of Gotham City, Prince also composed songs for the movie.

...I've been reading COMICS SCENE ever since it came out in comic stores and I think this magazine is one of the best I've ever read. But there is a question that I need to ask which is, who won that *Batman* contest a couple of months ago? Also, I can't find this month's issue, I was hoping that you could help me out.

Todd Bradley Pluppen
Box 141 St. Germain
Winipeg, Manitoba
Canada ROG 2A0

For the winner, see page 28. For subscription info, see the inside front cover. For back issue info, turn to page 65.



Art: Mike Fisher

...I noticed that while some were defending comedic actors, they were also rapping muscular actors through the use of such words as "musclebound," "goon" and "idiot." Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Dolph Lundgren are all learned men, each holding a college degree (the reason why Stallone speaks in slurred sentences is not due to illiteracy, but rather an accident to his jaw during his birth). Though they may not fit the mold, I think that they each do have talent that goes beyond their biceps.

Although, after looking at Dolph Lundgren as *The Punisher*, I think comic fans were protesting about the wrong movie. Lundgren looks more like a male dominatrix from a gay S&M bar than a vigilante. As for Mike Fisher's cartoon about casting comedians as Thor, Wonder Woman and Captain America, all I can say is that the comics couldn't do any worse than the so-called actors who initially played them.

Willie Holmes
8453 S. Saginaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617

...I have been carefully reading the letters in your wonderful rag. All this talk of the *Batman* movie made me wonder if anyone knows that there is a *Punisher* movie coming to theaters this summer. As a *Punisher* fan, I am delighted to see him on the big screen. The choice of Dolph Lundgren as the *Punisher* was an excellent one. Although he won't be wearing his skull costume, Frank Castle will still instill fear in the hearts of criminals.

John Novitch
R.D. 4, Box 4312
Mohnton, PA 19540

...New World Pictures has really screwed up this time. Dolph Lundgren makes a great *Punisher*, but he's missing something. Where's the skull? Without the skull on his chest, it's just going to be another vigilante movie like *Cobra*. Not having the skull on his chest is like not having apples in apple pie. No one is ever going to know this movie is

from a comic book, unless you read comics. It's as bad as having *Superman* without the "S."

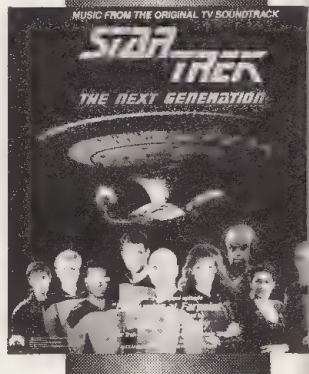
Todd Jamrose
P.O. Box 27
Brownsburg, VA 24415

...Out of all the actors the readers chose to play Judge Dredd in a feature film, I'm surprised that Fred Dryer's name didn't come up. Fred Dryer who plays the starring role in the TV show *Hunter* would be the ideal Dredd. He has the stern jaw, the height (6'5"), and the commanding screen presence. Throw out all ideas for a big name star to play Dredd. Let Judge Dredd become a success because of its plot or acting, not because he was portrayed by Rambo or Commando.

While on the subject of movies having to do with the comic world, I would like to get a load off my chest about the *RoboCop* sequel scripted by Frank Miller. Upon reading this, I thought, "Great! This movie's going to be amazing." Then I thought, "Oh, no!" Don't get me wrong, I think Frank Miller is a superb writer. It's just that I hope he doesn't get caught up in his commercialism. I have seen many writers and artists fall into this pit of despair. In the beginning, *G.I. Joe* was a great comic. I used to like the appearance of new characters. But soon new recruits started popping in and out like Jack-in-the-Boxes. I can only take so many issues with so many men. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was a great comic in its first few years. It was original as well as intriguing. But Eastman and Laird, in my mind, began to rely too much on their reputation. The stories began to become mundane and uninteresting—even more so since the TV show and the action figures have come out. *RoboCop* is beginning to fall into this groove, with action figures and the cartoon.

But if anybody can make the sequel to *RoboCop* without depending on the first *RoboCop*'s success, it's Frank Miller. I hope he can bring the grittiness he uses in comics to the big screen.

Tim Roddick
Ingersoll, Ontario
Canada



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DARK KNIGHT DIRECTOR



By ADAM PIRANI

In Gotham City, filmmaker Tim Burton unshrouds a Batman.

H... creature, haunting the twisted alleys of Gotham City, striking from the shadows to destroy the criminals who prey on the weak and helpless.

He is, of course, the darknight detective created 50 years ago by Bob Kane and brought to the screen this summer in *Batman*. And he answers to no one—except, perhaps his director, Tim Burton.

It was Burton who eliminated Robin from the film... who dreamed of naming a police named Jack Nicholson...and who cast Michael Keaton as Batman.

Regarding Keaton, who played the title role in Burton's previous film *Batlejuice* (which he discussed in STARLOG #130), the director has no regrets. "Before we got Michael," Burton begins, "we were wondering which direction to go: Do we go the unknown route, or do we go with a known actor? What do we do with that? We analyzed it, and I met a lot of actors. I met some unknowns, and I actually met a number of actors who you might say are physically more like the classic comic-book image." Though he declines to name names, he notes, "They could have done a good job."

"I was just very worried about Batman in the sense that, it's such a weird costume, it's such a weird idea, I felt that you had to get somebody who you could see was kind of nuts, not in a good or a bad way but just had a gleam in his eye."

"In comic books, you can have a guy go be a vigilante and it's fine, but in a movie, you've got to watch out that it's not *Death Wish* or *Kumbó*. That's very one-dimensional, and this is a very psychologically complex character."

"You don't want to spend all your time going into the psychology of this guy, and I felt that by dealing with an actor like Michael, who you can see has this look in his eye and is also a real human being, that took care of a lot. Right then and there, you could believe it."

"I mean, I just kept having trouble," the director confesses. "I would meet these guys and [they were] very handsome, very strong, and even interesting actors, but I imagined them in the Bat-suit, and I would say, 'How are we going to explain [why he does the Bat-suit]? With a guy who's so handsome, so rich, and so smart...where's the psychological underpin?'"

"With Michael, he looks like a regular guy, but he also looks like he's not. I could see him putting on a Bat-suit. I could see the frenetic quality. I could see the split. I was always clear that the movie wasn't going to be jokey and that it's not the TV series. I just felt it was a better way to go."

However, Burton admits, casting Keaton "wasn't even my idea. I think one of the producers mentioned it to me, and I was actually taken aback to begin with. Then, I said, 'That's a strange idea. Let me think about it.' I kept thinking about it, and it started to make real sense to me. So, I'm happy. Michael's very good."

The controversy over Keaton's casting

did have its effects: "I was worried, as anybody is worried about anything, especially after the press," Burton says. "I felt really bad for Michael, because he's doing a difficult job and it's difficult to play these kinds of characters, and then when you're getting this kind of press... But he did a very good job."

"I'm actually happy because all this outcry and outrage, it doesn't have anything to do with the movie. In the movie, he's good and strong, and the movie's not what they think it is. I imagine, as soon as people heard Michael Keaton, they thought of the TV series."

"But the other thing that I realized very early on in this film is that it was going to be a bit of a nightmare because

"In Hollywood, everybody talks about Jack Nicholson, for any part from a 12-year-old boy to an 80-year-old woman," says Burton, who didn't seriously believe the actor would become the Joker.



Director Tim Burton wasn't looking for the right physique, but the proper psyche to fill the Bat-suit. Casting Keaton wasn't his initial idea, though.

A person dressed as the Joker is sitting in the driver's seat of a green vehicle, possibly a car or a small truck. The person is wearing a black top hat, a dark blue jacket, and a red and white striped scarf. They are holding a large, orange and yellow megaphone in their right hand. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting an outdoor setting at night. The vehicle has a large, painted face on its side, which is a caricature of the Joker with a wide, open-mouthed smile and wild, dark hair. The face is painted in shades of green, yellow, and red, matching the vehicle's color scheme.

for so many comic-book fans as there are, there is an equal—if not more extreme—amount of TV show fans," the filmmaker notes. "I've been involved with *Batman* for several years now, and in fact, everybody who comes up to me actually asks more about the TV series than they do about comic books. I think the comic book people have a louder voice, because they feel stronger about things.

"All I can say is that it's true to the spirit of the character and it's also its own movie. I mean, what can you copy? I remember when Sam [Hamm, scriptwriter, CS #3 & STARLOG YEARBOOK #4] and I first started working on it, we got the *Batman Encyclopedia* [actually Volume One of Michael Fleisher's *Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes*] which shows that the series disrupts its own history: First, this is how *Batman* was created and then this was how he was created; this is how the Joker was and then there's this; and then *Kahn* is here



and then he's not here. There's no such thing as a consistent history.

"Batman's an archetypal character," says Burton. "You have to take it as that. I thought, 'Why can't there be a place for everything?' It's like any sort of folk character. There are 50 Sherlock Holmes's, 50,000 Phantom of the Operas, 100,000 Beauty and the Beasts, and you're going to get that with these type of characters. People should be more open."

Actually persuading Keaton to play Batman was not too difficult, the director says. Burton had, of course, provided Keaton with one of his most successful roles to date, *Batman Returns*. "The next day, the day was that he was tired; he has been working straight for a long time," Burton says. "He went from *Batman Returns* to *Dead and Alive* to another [DC Comics] Team [to Batman]."

"Michael was a bit nervous. He was very right in saying, 'I don't look the part. I'm not the image of this kind of character.' But he felt comfortable with the approach and he felt it was interesting, which is why I think any of the actors—myself included—wanted to do the movie. We weren't just interested in what it had been before or just covering a comic book."

Having Jack Nicholson play the Joker was something Burton never expected would really happen. "In Hollywood, everybody talks about Jack Nicholson. He say part from a 12-year-old boy to an 80-year-old woman," the director says.



All Batman Photos: Merry Cross/Getty Images



"It probably would have gone in a little different direction with Sean [Young]," says Burton, although Sean Young's last-minute PDA-to be added to the film's postproduction.

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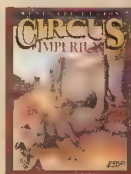


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Movies have often been a source of comic-book inspiration. As early as the 1930s, major releases boasted comic-book tie-ins to promote business. However, those books were a kind of souvenir program, ink-and-panel incarnations that detailed the parent picture's plot. Direct adaptations aside, today's movie comics are a more independent breed, boasting all-new storylines and often new characters as well.

But will comic readers be interested in following the exploits of a character with snake-like hair, the face of a piranha, fluorescent yellow blood and a bad attitude problem? Writer Mark Verheiden certainly hopes so. The LA-based scribe's *ALIENS* series (CS #3) was such a success that Dark Horse Comics decided to develop another movie-themed project. Since FX monsters are in vogue, 1987's *Predator* was picked as a likely candidate for four-color translation.

The way Verheiden tells it, Dark Horse and 20th Century Fox were the ones who originally midwifed the idea. It didn't take them long, though, to bring in the writer. "I suspect," Verheiden acknowledges, "that it has something to do with the success of the *ALIENS* mini-series. In fact, *ALIENS* turned out to be a much greater success than any of us anticipated. Both Dark Horse and Fox were pleased, so when they came up with *Predator*, they asked me to write it."

Predator the movie detailed the adventures of a group of commandos headed by "Dutch" Schaefer (Arnold Schwarzenegger). While on a mission in the Central American jungles, they encounter a murderous alien who hunts humans for sport. The *Predator* wipes out Dutch's team, leaving the muscleman alone for the final confrontation, mano a alieno. Schwarzenegger, of course, prevails, allowing an open door for sequels.

Still, the question remains: Why a *Predator* comic? "Well," Verheiden reasons, "from my point-of-view, I found *Predator* to be a visually exciting film. The movie was open-ended, with many avenues yet to explore. I'm really interested in the *Predators*' psychology—what exactly are they doing? After all, they're pretty bright guys, flying around in spaceships. Why hunt?"

"It's that aspect of these *Predators* that I want to focus on. Hunters are out to have a good time; they get drunk, kill things and skin them. I don't think the movie script really examined the *Predator*."

To be as original as possible, Verheiden will shift the setting from the steamy jungles of Central America to the concrete jungles of New York City. High-rise canyons will replace vine-draped forests, but the excitement will remain the same.

"This four-issue series," Verheiden elaborates, "deals with a guy nicknamed 'Schaefer.' Schaefer is a cop, and he just hap-



PREDATOR™

His New York Adventure

There goes the neighborhood—and everyone who lives there. Writer Mark Verheiden explains what's happening.

By ERIC NIDERKAST



To beat the Predator at his own game, the cops will have to team-up with "real down-and-dirty types."

pens to be Dutch's brother. He's suddenly confronted with a rash of really violent murders, bodies hung up like slabs of beef. It's the calling card of the Predator, of course, but at first Schaefer can't figure out what's happening.

"Schaefer bumps into General Phillips, a character from the movie who was not only Dutch's friend but also his commanding officer. Phillips, you'll recall, was the one who sent Dutch out on that jungle mission in the first place. The general knows about the Predators and wants to help Schaefer, yet doesn't want the cop screwing around with the situation."

Laughs Verheiden, "The U.S. government is upset that Schaefer is tackling the Predators. After all, at the movie's end, the dying Predator set off what looked like a nuclear device. If the Predators say, 'Oh, so you don't want to play anymore?' and set off a nuclear device in New York, it might cause some disruption!"

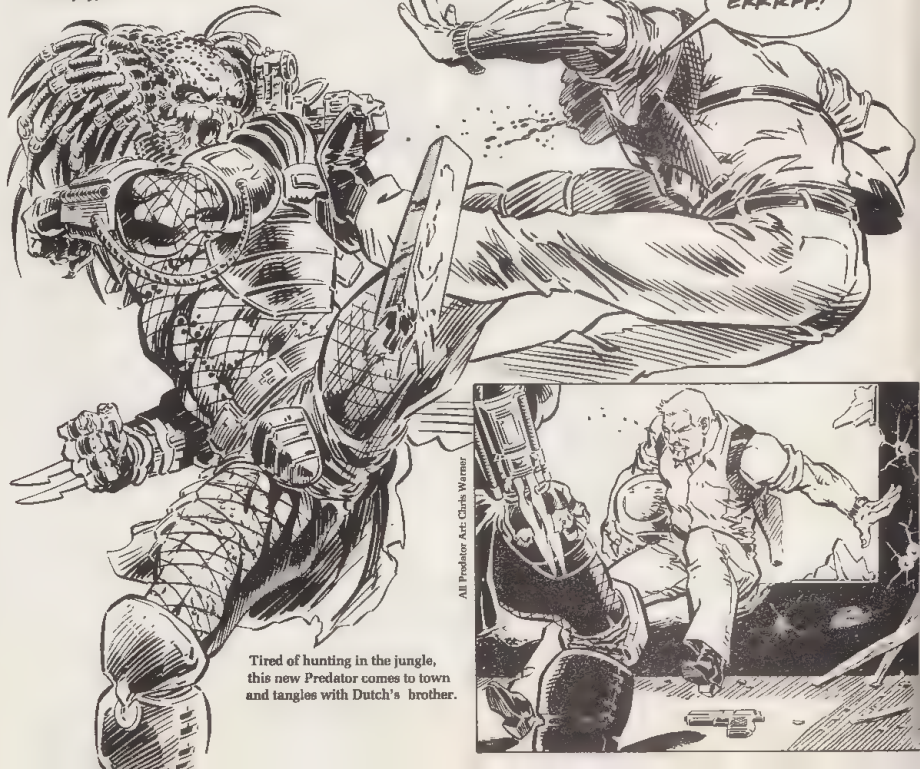
The comics scribe stresses that Dutch will not make an appearance in the Predator mini-series, not even a cameo. Schaefer will have to do without his brother's bulging biceps and dazzling deltoids. "In my story," Verheiden says,

"Dutch has disappeared, and we don't really know what has happened to him. We never find out, either! If he does enter the picture, it's in the context of how his brother feels about his disappearance. I see Schaefer as a tough cop who wouldn't let anything stand in his way."

One thing is certain: This current opus will not include a journey to the Predator's home planet. Much will depend on the reception—and the sales—of this pilot series. "If it's successful," the author notes, "we may branch off into the Predator's homeland. Another thing we won't do is have thought or word balloons for the Predators. In the movie, the Predator didn't really speak at all except to mimic Schwarzenegger at the end."

In conversation, Verheiden uses "Predator" and "Predators" almost in the same breath. A figure of speech, a slip of the tongue, or will there be a pack of Predators on the prowl? "Well," he says guardedly, "let's just say one for now, but others may appear!"

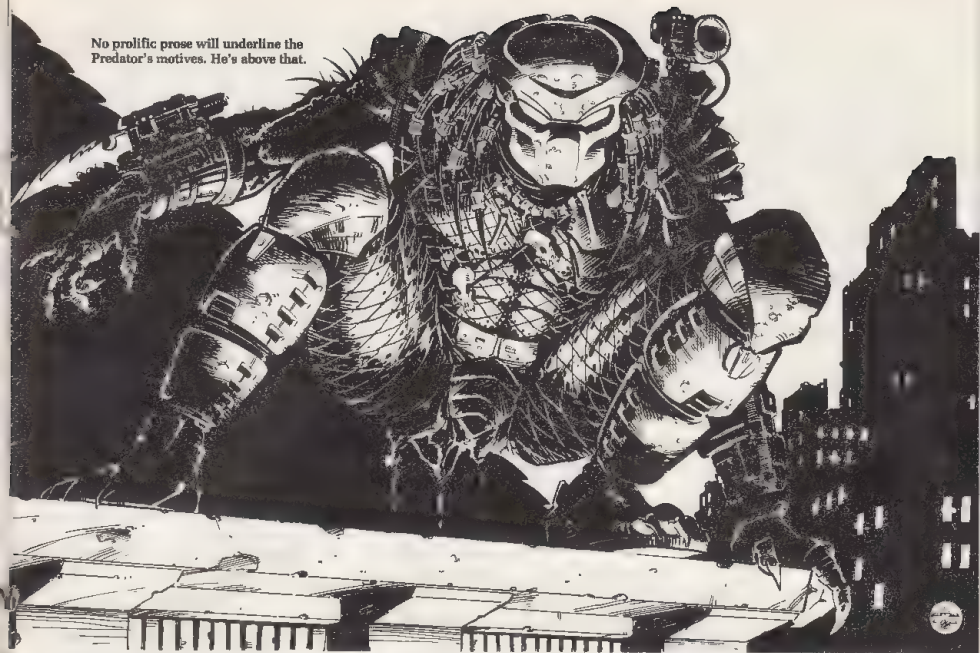
Verheiden also has to address one of the film's basic problems. Unlike the double-jawed creatures of *ALIENS*, the Predators possess a high degree of



Tired of hunting in the jungle, this new Predator comes to town and tangles with Dutch's brother.

All Predator Art: Chuck Warner

No prolific prose will underline the Predator's motives. He's above that.



technological sophistication. Yet how can a species capable of interplanetary travel be incapable of recognizing humans as fellow rational beings with a technology of our own? Why do they consider us, as Verheiden puts it, "mere bugs"?

Undaunted, the writer attributes this Predator blind spot to "arrogance, sheer arrogance. They probably look on us as monkeys. True, monkeys don't build nuclear bombs or have big buildings, but the point is these creatures have no compassion for human beings. Hunting is party time for the Predators. It's 'Let's go out, shoot a few humans, drink alien beer, and maybe build a campfire on the top of the Empire State Building!'"

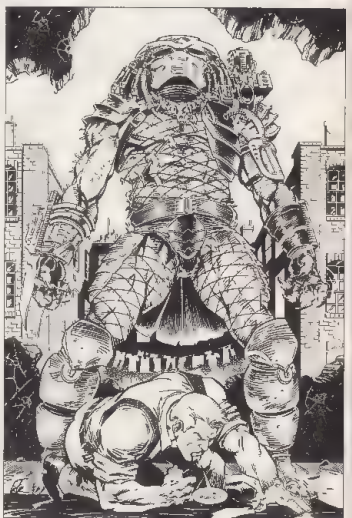
At the same time, the picture he paints of the Big Apple reveals a rotten core. "My premise," he ventures, "is that in today's New York, many people are armed for safety, and that's exactly who the Predators are after. You see, the Predators like a challenge, they like taking some risks. And they're not just going after the obvious targets—the gangs, drug pushers and the like. They tackle others as well.

"For example, I have a scene in the first issue where the Predators go after a subway car full of executives, real Wall Street types. It doesn't make sense at first, then it's discovered that each executive was carrying a gun!"

But in blowing away all of society's undesirables—drug lords, street punks, gang members and inside traders, it would seem that the Predators are doing New York a favor. This irony is underscored when Schaefer vainly searches for allies in his lonely quest. "He's having a bad time," Verheiden reveals, "because his fellow officers don't really believe what's going on. In fighting the Predators, he's forced to ally himself with some of the worst people in the city, real down-and-dirty types. He has to join forces with the very people he would rather arrest!"

Although he concedes Predator will have a "sarcastic, cynical tone" to it, the story will be less claustrophobic and brooding than the *ALIENS* series. Not that he didn't enjoy writing *ALIENS*. "I loved doing *ALIENS*," he admits, "and I loved Mark Nelson's artwork in that series. But *ALIENS* was a kind of dark, psychological drama, and [Predator artist] Chris Warner and I decided to be more 'up' with this one, a let's-go-for-it action tale."

There's a Predator movie sequel in the works, but Verheiden is largely unconcerned about stepping on any cinematic toes. "20th Century Fox reads my scripts carefully, and if I was butting heads with them on possible movie plots,



Not everyone is rooting for Schaefer—the last time a Predator lost, a nuclear explosion went off.



Meanwhile, back in the jungle, the Phantom will learn of his limits and overcome them.

they would let me know! At this point, they've approved what I'm doing with *Predator*, just like they approved what we did with *ALIENS*."

And now Verheiden is at work on a sequel of his own. "I'm actually well into the second *ALIENS* series for *Dark Horse*. It's very exciting; the new four-issue offering will go to color. Like its predecessor, the second series will be a self-contained story, so new readers don't have to wade through a bunch of background.

"In the first series, Earth was pretty messed up, with a kind of mass psychosis that led people to believe the Alien Queen was a god, etc. This series will deal with the ramifications of an Alien-ridden Earth, and how our characters deal with it."

But that's not all. "An entirely new challenge," Verheiden teases, "will suddenly arise out in space, something entirely different from the Alien problem!"

Recently, Verheiden was also given the nod to helm DC's new *Phantom* series. The *Phantom* has been a newspaper

staple for decades, but the writer hopes the comic book will attract a whole new audience.

"There are a couple of things about the *Phantom*," he notes, "that really appeal to me. The main thing is that the *Phantom* isn't super-powered. Oh, I've written stories for superheroes before, and it's not that I dislike them. It's just that I can't understand them emotionally. If you have unlimited power, things are easy. You could solve many problems.

"The *Phantom* is much more understandable. He's a man who is compelled by his past, all 21 generations of it. He's following the family legacy. He has no choice, which makes for a very interesting story angle. He must continue the *Phantom* line, so he has to get married. The first 13 issues will follow him as he pursues Diana Palmer, gets engaged and marries her."

Actually, in the newspaper strip, the couple have already been married for over a decade. "That's true," Verheiden admits, "but we've deliberately backed it up to allow readers who don't follow the

newspaper version to be in on the legend of the *Phantom*."

Verheiden hopes to inform as well as entertain by dealing with contemporary African problems. After all, in this age of acid rain, pollution and ozone deterioration, Africa's problems mirror our own.

"In consultation with [then-] editor Bob Greenberger," Verheiden explains, "I decided to take the *Phantom* on a more contemporary tack. In *Phantom* #7, he'll deal with toxic waste dumping in Africa. You see, western corporations are unloading their poisons on these underdeveloped countries. But because the *Phantom* isn't super-powered, he'll have to deal with this issue in a more realistic way."

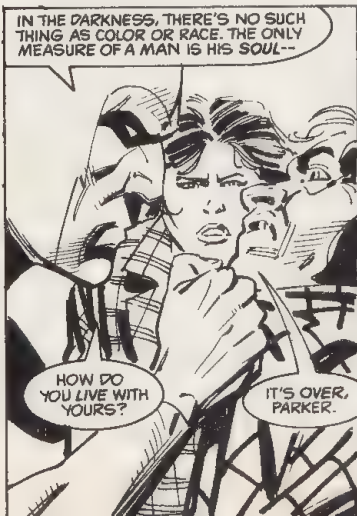
However, Verheiden wants to avoid the pitfalls of being preachy. "The main trick," he ventures, "is to tell interesting stories. A comic that's nothing but *sturm und drang* ['blood and thunder'] about the evils of toxic dumping would be worthless. But with the *Phantom*, we show a lone man can make a difference. Unlike the superheroes, perhaps, he can win small victories, but not the whole war.

"He may, for example, turn back one toxic waste ship, but more are going to follow. I have a confrontation in the comic between the *Phantom* and the captain of a toxic waste ship. 'You've taken care of me,' the skipper says, 'but there will be 100 more ships to follow.' The *Phantom* replies, 'Just let me worry about you!' In other words, the *Phantom* will take these things one step at a time."

Since the *Phantom* is a white man, Verheiden also has to avoid anything that smacks of neocolonialism. "He's reluctant to meddle directly in the internal affairs of these new African nations," the writer insists. "He deeply respects the African people, and though he has far less respect for some of their governments, he's leaving them alone. He's not going to come on in and say, 'OK, I'm your new president!'"

But Verheiden isn't interested in only bringing others' characters to a different medium. He hopes to do the same for a more personal creation. "A very short time ago," he says, "I optioned *The American* to movie producers Michael Meltzer and David Helper. They've produced such pictures as *The Hidden* and *Dead Heat*. We're working very hard with them to get *The American* going as a feature. The main reason why I decided to option it to Michael and David was that they're committed to giving me the screenwriting chores. Sure, I've written screenplays before, but it's still an unusual move on their part in the sense that this movie will have a much bigger budget than anything I've done before," says Mark Verheiden. "I'm really very pleased."

Unlike the other heroes, the *Phantom* does what he does because he has a tradition to uphold. That legendary legacy attracted writer Mark Verheiden.



All *Phantom* Art: Luke. © Danelli. Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.



HEAVY ARTILLERY



Armed with a lot of "Punisher" style dialogue that Galt blasts the viewer, *Blade* is the screen.

More than 100 million people in the United States are affected by chronic diseases, and the number is growing. The leading causes of death and disability are heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic lung disease. These diseases are preventable, and the best way to prevent them is by making healthy choices every day. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has a new website, www.nationalcancer.org, that provides information on how to prevent cancer and other chronic diseases. The website is part of the NCI's National Cancer Prevention Campaign, which aims to reduce the burden of cancer by promoting healthy behaviors and early detection. The website includes information on diet, exercise, tobacco use, and alcohol consumption, as well as information on how to get a mammogram, PSA test, and colonoscopy. The website also features a "Healthy Choices" section that provides tips on how to make healthy choices every day. The website is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to learn more about preventing cancer and other chronic diseases.

It was Friday the 13th in sheep's clothing.
"It was an instant turn-off,"
Goldblatt of his first encounter with the

...I read a lot of potential, but I couldn't think, "This script has many problems."

Obviously, those problems were overcome since, as Goldblatt relates, the details of that early first encounter, *The Punisher* is in the can and awaiting its theatrical unveiling this summer. Goldblatt, whose producing credits include *Backdraft*, *Twins*, *Hook*, *The Hot Chick*, and *Crash*, didn't like *The Punisher* warts and all, however. The filmmaker, in fact, remembers standing his ground until those warts were sandblasted away.

"I really thought the film had tremendous possibilities, but it needed to be taken in directions that definitely were not in that script," the director says. "The character needed more dimension. He just couldn't be completely psychotic. When I told the studio people what I thought, I was told that the New World people liked the script the way it was. I said, 'Well, if that's the case, there's no point in our even taking a meeting,' and I went back and finished *Dead Heat*."

"That was the last I heard about *The Punisher* for quite a while. What happened in the meantime is that somebody decided that the script *did* have problems and Robert Kamen [CS #7] was brought in to reshape it. Kamen's script basically reflected my feelings about the [first] script. So, when it was offered to me again, I was happy to do it."

But not before doing a crash course in *The Punisher*. Goldblatt read every Punisher comic he could get his hands on, and the result was a director armed and dangerous with ways "to make *The Punisher* work."

What Goldblatt's research found was the horns of a dilemma.

"The Punisher in comic-book form has gone through many changes since he was first introduced," explains Goldblatt, "and these days, he comes across as be-



An early draft of the script portrayed the Punisher as a total psychotic, which made director Mark Goldblatt originally pass on the project.



Given a justifiable reason for his actions, Frank Castle (Lundgren) and his "pal" (Jeroen Krabbe) go hunting.

ing almost literate. But since this was going to be the first Punisher film rather than the tenth, we knew going in that the film could not be revisionist and totally take the character and twist him into something else.

"I felt that the major challenge was going to be bringing this comic-book character to the screen and making him believable to that built-in following who really cares about the Punisher. If they couldn't buy it, nobody else would."

A big key to making that sale hinged on the Punisher's outfit and whether audiences familiar with the character would go for *Road Warrior* chic rather than skull-emblazoned spandex.

"When you take a comic-book

character and put him on the big screen, you get a transition that's very different from what you perceive as great on the printed page. When you put a Dolph Lundgren in spandex, you've gotta watch out because it could look very silly," says Goldblatt. "What we ultimately decided to do was to get into the character's psychology and create a costume based on what we found."

"And what we found was a character so involved in his mission that he couldn't be bothered with style. So, we created a costume that looks like it was made from things the Punisher just picked up off the ground and pieced together. Frank Castle is the total utilitarian and it shows in his costume."



Goldblatt says the comics' Punisher is becoming more *seizable*

The Punisher movie, in essence, introduces audiences to the hero five years after Frank Castle decided to take matters into his own hands due to his family's death.

"The back story is somewhat different," offers Goldblatt. "Rather than it being a matter of Castle's family being in the wrong place at the wrong time, we've made it more of a personal vendetta against Castle than an accident."

"We also realized that starting the film with the origin would have made this stylistically two different pictures. The way that pre-stories are usually done is to introduce a bunch of characters, create a nice family situation and suddenly blow them away."

"We figured that the origin sequence would have taken up the film's first 17 minutes, and we felt it was important to get into the Punisher's world right away. So, it was decided to create the origin in a flashback sequence and integrate it totally into the Punisher's world and make this a true Punisher film from beginning to end."

But before you can have a true Punisher film, you've got to have a true Punisher. The search for the real Frank Castle took some expected and unexpected turns.

"Arnold Schwarzenegger was considered for a while," recalls the director, "and prototypically, he would have been the ideal choice. But what he gets per pic-

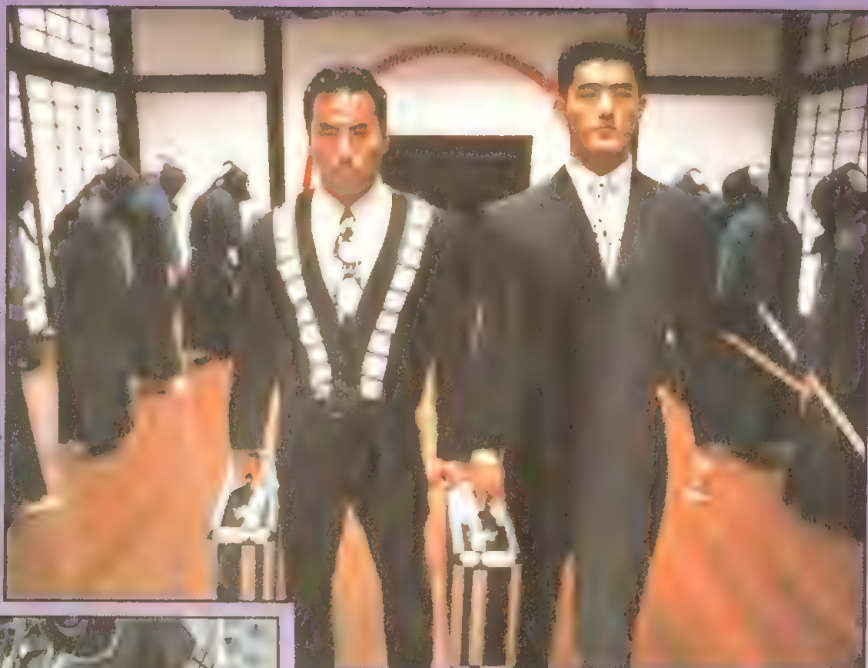
ture was nearly the film's entire budget [\$11 million], and so he was out. There were your typical action hero choices like Chuck Norris and Steven Seagal. For a while, even Mickey Rourke was being considered when we had the idea of casting a real good actor who was less athletic.

"Finally, after a lot of looking around, we got back to the essence of the film. This is an action picture and we really needed somebody who looked like he could do all these crazy things."

It was at that point that Goldblatt and New World turned their attention to Dolph Lundgren. Goldblatt had caught Lundgren's act in *Rocky IV* and *Masters of the Universe*, and, like others, had fallen for some easy misconceptions.

"I thought, 'OK, this guy is definitely a commanding presence, but he speaks with a Swedish accent and doesn't speak very good English.' But he did look right for the part and so we called him in and talked to him. And the first thing I discovered was that he speaks better English than I do," the filmmaker laughs.

"There was also a real sense of natural menace about Dolph. You knew he might have some trouble doing Hamlet, but you could also sense that here's somebody with the natural ability to be a major action star."



It's easy to tell where the Punisher has been.

Goldblatt, as he is known to do on action films, extensively storyboarded *The Punisher's* main stunt sequences. By the time *The Punisher* cast and crew touched down in Australia, Goldblatt was able to quote the film chapter and verse.

"There wasn't a whole lot of time to waste," says Goldblatt, citing the film's 53-day shooting schedule. "It broke down to a little more than three pages of script a day, and many of those things could only be shot once."

Hence Goldblatt, who has always been big on lots of coverage to begin with, would trail after Lundgren with as many as five cameras. Multiple coverage was

"The Punisher moves through so many different worlds," explains Goldblatt, including the stark and deadly Yakuza underworld.

necessary the day Lundgren, at the wheel of a bus, rammed a criminal blockade, plummeted down a catwalk astride a Harley-Davidson and slid down a cable while blasting away with major weaponry.

"And it was me standing there biting my nails, hoping like hell Dolph wouldn't kill himself," chuckles Goldblatt. "Dolph was more than willing to do his own stunts and, for the sake of authenticity, we had to let him do many things himself."

Consequently, filming *The Punisher* was not so much work as a busman's holiday for the comics-inspired Goldblatt.

"I've been a comic-book fan since I was a kid, so this film had an extra bit of kick going for me," crows Goldblatt. "I was one of those people who had number one of everything and, unfortunately, I was also one of those kids whose mother threw everything out. What I remember vividly was when Marvel began their superhero line and, in particular, Spider-Man, the Human Torch and the Fantastic Four. These were characters with real feelings and problems. They made someone like the Punisher, easily the most alienated comic character of all time, possible."

As if to indicate that the Punisher's comic-book times are definitely changing, Goldblatt reaches into a drawer and offers a recent issue as evidence.

"The Punisher has always been this alienated and burned-out character, but in this issue, he goes to Las Vegas and actually mixes with people. Hell, he even had a love interest in one issue even though it turned out she was only trying to kill him. I don't ever see the Punisher becoming totally literate, but I think you can see that he is becoming more social."

Goldblatt recently survived the true acid test of a Punisher film: the screening of a close-to-final cut of the film for an audience of hardcore Punisher fans.

"It was kind of scary to be sitting in that theater watching the audience cheering as the Punisher was blowing all these people away. They seemed to enjoy the film and made the appropriate responses at the right moments."

"And I had more than one person tell me they were glad we didn't throw in a contrived love interest for Frank. That was never my intention. Which is not to say that the Punisher might not, at some point, fall in love."

"But right now, the only thing the Punisher loves is his artillery." 

One of the things that makes the Fantastic Four different from the Avengers is that the FF is a family," says Walt Simonson, newly named as the writer/artist on Marvel Comics' flagship title. "The Avengers is a team of very strong guys who go out and beat people up. They're like a club. So, I don't think I would ever get very far from the original members of the FF."

Simonson, best remembered for his three-year stint as writer on *Thor*, knows the Avengers well, having recently ended a several-issue run as that series' writer (CS #3). "I think it's important to follow those differences to make the books stand out from one another. One of the reasons that, on *Thor*, I went strongly to the myths for source material is I thought that was what made *Thor* different from all the other superheroes running around. In the same way, since the FF is a family

Can Walt Simonson Improve

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE?

It's a dramatic question
as the writer/artist
assumes
command
of the
Fantastic
Four.

By PATRICK
DANIEL O'NEILL

Art: Walt Simonson

The Thing gives a helping hand to Death's Head. Simonson liked working on the British import so much, he'll be trying to fit him into the FF's continuity.





affair, I want to use that. At the same time, my job as a writer is to not be predictable. If I'm predictable, why bother reading the book? One of the things that has made X-Men successful all these years is that you just can't trust Chris Claremont—he's not a bad guy, but you can't trust him. That's important. The readers shouldn't be able to trust the writer. They can trust him to play fair with them, but not to the extent that they can figure out where he's going. I don't want to say, "These four guys will be the FF," and make that the end of it. I don't know; it may not work out that way."

His stint on the self-proclaimed "World's Greatest Comics Magazine" began shortly after he left The Avengers.

"Ralph Macchio, editor of *Fantastic Four*, asked if I would be interested in writing the book. I gave it some thought—I had several different offers, as it happens, at that time. I thought about all of them and decided I would probably have the most fun with FF," Simonson recalls. "It's a book I've always enjoyed, one that I read when I was reading Marvels back in the '60s. But I never really thought much about actually doing it myself, not like, say, *Thor*. I had more of an emotional commitment to *Thor*—particularly because of my interest in mythology, dating from before my interest in comics—or before I discovered *Thor* at any rate."

So now Simonson is writing *Fantastic Four*. How did he end up with the artistic chores as well? "I nudged myself—or got nudged, I'm not sure myself—into the drawing. I hadn't really thought about it when I accepted the writing assignment.



The Silver Surfer and the Thing will get cosmic—or at least try—on a \$40 million budget.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC **FILM**

Ralph sort of nudged me into it, or else it was always assumed I would do both. I won't lay that on Ralph; I think it was as much my doing as anybody's. And to be truthful, ever since I stopped pencilling *Thor*, I've been writing some comics and pencilling others, and never really doing both on the same title. I wanted to get back into that. I had a good time doing all those things, but I thought it was time I got back to the writing and art on the same title."

Given that Simonson's first issue of *Fantastic Four* is still several months down the line, has the writer/artist thought at all about storylines? "I have thought about where my plotlines will start from and what they'll be, but I don't want to give it all away to you, because then who would buy the comic book, right?" he laughs. "Hey, I'm making a living here!"

Initially, Simonson notes, he'll pick up the threads of the stories he would have

With Neus Constantin producer Bernard Eichinger's latest project, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, now complete, the way has been cleared for Eichinger to go ahead with his long-promised film version of the *Fantastic Four*, according to Marvel Comics Publisher Stan Lee.

"It has been in the works for several years," Lee confirms. "Bern Eichinger has had three other big movies that he had to do first. He's a big fan of the *Fantastic Four*. He wants to spend about \$40 million on the thing. He claims it's going to be the biggest superhero movie ever made. It's a little scary to think of it, but that seems to be his intention."

According to Lee, Eichinger, who optioned the *FF* four years ago, has been long anxious to go to camera with the cinematic equivalent of "the World's Greatest Comics Magazine," but had to postpone it repeatedly due to prior commitments, including producing *The Neverending Story* and *The Name of the Rose*. Eichinger's plans are not modest. He's skipping over the early issues and many classic villains such as the Mole Man and Doctor Doom in favor of adapting Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *Fantastic Four* magnus opus.

"He wants to do the stories where we first meet the Silver Surfer and Galactus," Lee reveals. "He's hoping he can get a good movie out of this."

There is no script as yet, Lee says, so plot specifics are scarce. Two German writers—Neus Constantin is a German production company—are currently developing the treatment, which Lee speculates will not only adapt the 1967 *Galactus* trilogy, but include the *FF*'s beginnings.

"I don't know really how you can do a movie like that without doing an origin," Lee says. "How do you have a guy who's on fire and flying through the air and not

explain how it happened? I'm sure there'll be some kind of origin."

Lee readily acknowledges the seemingly insurmountable technical problems associated with bringing the cosmic-powered quartet to the screen, as well as the marketing challenges that lie in wait



Sorry, Doom, Annihilus and Mole Man, but Neus Constantin plans to make a big star of Galactus in the *FF* film.

for characters who, while famous to comic readers, aren't exactly household names like Superman and Batman.

"How he is going to do Reed Richards stretching or the Human Torch flying, I don't have the slightest idea," Stan Lee admits, "but he says he's going to do it and I can't wait to see that. How they're going to be sold and marketed is Bern's responsibility, but I think that anything can succeed if it's done well. It can be something brand new that nobody has ever seen before, like *Crocodile Dundee* or *Beetlejuice*. Or it can be something that we're familiar with, like *Superman*. It can be something as clever as *Howard the Duck*. That was done badly and it failed. It really depends on how well they do it—and I'm going to be on this guy's back every step of the way and try to make sure we get a good script out of *The Fantastic Four*."

—Will Murray



title, the editors give him a "brief" as to the direction they feel the series should take. Sometimes, that's a return to basics, other times, it's a call for new ideas. Simonson says the powers-that-be at Marvel gave him no suggestions whatsoever as to what kind of title *Fantastic Four* should be. "I wasn't really given any brief—either in terms of characters or storylines. Let me backtrack a little: When I took over *Thor* all those years ago, one of the things that came with it was *carte blanche*. That was partly because the book wasn't doing well at the time. That was a great position to be in—if it failed, they would say, 'Well, the book was dying anyway'; if it succeeded, they would say, 'Simonson—what a genius!'" he chuckles.

"For a variety of reasons, that didn't work out too well with *The Avengers*. There were just too many strings attached—the ties to Marvel continuity were too tight," Simonson recalls. "I found it very difficult to write *The Avengers* and maintain any momentum. There was a lot of backfilling and readjusting of storylines needed to match continuity elsewhere in the line. After a while, I wasn't having much fun and I felt the stories weren't as effective as they might have been."

The accomplished artist/writer believes those kinds of problems won't crop up with Reed Richards and company. "With the *Fantastic Four*, they're not really strung together with other characters as much as the *Avengers* are," he points out. "I'll definitely be using Reed, Sue and Johnny; I'm not sure about the Thing yet—I'm reading the *FF* comic now, going

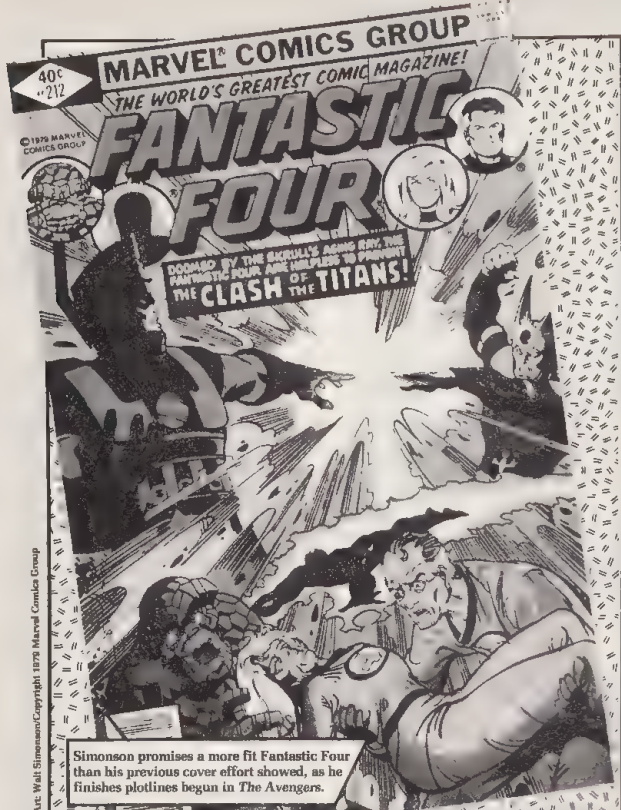
told in *The Avengers* if he had stayed on that book as writer. "The *Avengers* was odd. I did stuff there that, if I had to do it over, I would do it differently," he says now. "Maybe because I was shooting for issue #300, I took my time in getting the team reorganized and restructured. By the time I had the team the way I wanted it, I had left the book. So, I had really just reached the point where I felt I had cleared out all the dead wood and could begin taking off on the stories I wanted to

tell. But none of that stuff got told. I was looking forward to telling those stories."

"I don't want to get too specific: I probably have a good year's worth of continuity right in those stories—we would get inside the time bubble [from *Avengers* #296], find out what's going on; and then the ramifications of having been inside the time bubble could lead to other stories, where the *Fantastic Four* actually will fail, and fail in a major way."

Often when a new writer comes on to a





Simonson promises a more fit Fantastic Four than his previous cover effort showed, as he finishes plotlines begun in *The Avengers*.



Art: John Byrne/Copyright 1979 Marvel Comics Group

back and rereading the book's entire run. I want to see where everybody is as a character. I have an expert available—John Byrne. He probably knows as much about the FF as I know about Thor, and has offered to put his vast knowledge at my disposal if I get stuck and can't figure out what's going on. Wherever I come out of that research will determine what I'm going to do with the Thing. I know Marvel would like to have the core group back in working order and I have nothing against that."

Fantastic Four is well-known for its large and long-existing supporting cast—including Johnny Storm's wife, Alicia (once the Thing's girl friend), Johnny's college chum, Wyatt Wingfoot, and Franklin Richards, the son who is said to have vast potential as a super-powered being. However, Simonson says,

Can anyone resist the power of Doom? Simonson will reveal the true monarch, dispensing with the "phony" currently making his way in the Marvel Universe.

"My immediate concern is working out the relationships among the four principal characters. That takes precedence over sorting out the supporting cast and how I want to use them. When I get the chance, I would like to introduce a few new supporting characters of my own just so that it doesn't feel like the 'Retread Adventures of Reed and Sue.' I'll probably wind up doing a mix of some of the old guys and some of the new, as I did on Thor.

"Right now, in the FF, you've got one pair and one triangle," Simonson goes on. "And I want to explore Franklin and the relationship between the parents and the child. I don't want to send Franklin off to school, that's probably a dull story—but done well, maybe not. I would like to make some tip-of-the-hat gesture to the idea that Reed and Sue are trying to normalize things with Franklin. I might try to work hand-in-glove with Jon Bogdanove on *Power Pack*, because Franklin has become a nice part of that book.

"With Johnny and Ben, I would like to dig into this triangle with Alicia. I would like to do a little strip-mining of the tension there."

Among the villains for whom Simonson has plans, the FF's major nemesis, Doctor Doom, figures strongly. "Somewhere along the way, I want to do a Doctor Doom story, if only because you do *Fantastic Four*, you get to do Doctor Doom," Simonson jokes. "I don't want to do him a lot, but I would like to get to draw and write him. He has been wandering around trying to get help to put him back on the throne of Latveria, right? I don't know whether that will be resolved before I take over the book. If not, I would be inclined to resolve it.

"I have to say that I don't believe for a second that Doctor Doom is wandering around asking for handouts like that," he comments. "That's not my image of Doom. Maybe, in my vision of the character, we would discover that the Doom looking for handouts is the phony! That's just what Doom would do in my estimation. I see Doom in much the same way I see the heroes in the Marvel Universe. There are three villains at Marvel! Doom, the Red Skull, Loki—that I've always felt are, on their own terms, as cool as the heroes.

"There's an old *Fantastic Four* [#6] with Doom and the Sub-Mariner, where, at the end, Doom is sucked out into space onto a passing asteroid," Simonson remembers. "And he's yelling, 'Help me...help me...[voice getting smaller and smaller]. Even with all my respect for Stan and Jack, I said, 'Nsaah.' I didn't believe it. If Captain America were on that asteroid, floating away, he wouldn't be going, 'Help me...help me...,' he would be figuring some way to get off it. If I throw my shield, the reaction should... I always felt that Doom should have been like that, as should Loki

(continued on page 60)

Artist and the Beast

By SCOTT LOBDELL

Drawn to their romantic fantasy, Wendy Pini persuades Vincent and Catherine to pose for a "Portrait of Love."

After I saw that the first couple of episodes of *Beauty & the Beast* were so good, my reaction to it was like a reaction to an endangered species. My feeling was this thing is so good that it has to be in danger of being cancelled. I began right away to think of ways that, somewhere down the line, I might be able to contribute some energy to its survival."

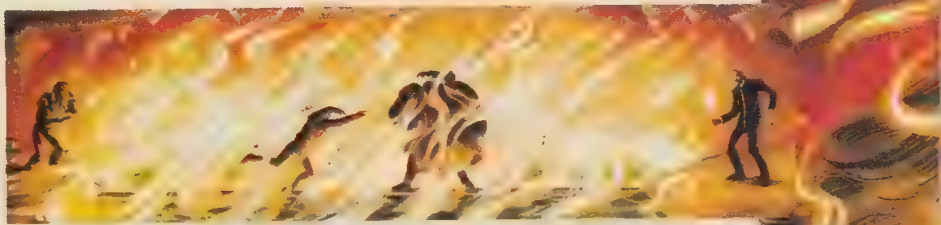
Considering the speaker is Wendy Pini, the writer/illustrator/creator of *Elfquest*, those resources proved formidable. Still, it would take nearly a year for her to see her original version of primetime's most unique love affair appear in a hand-painted graphic novel from First Comics.

But, before she could chronicle Catherine and Vincent's perpetually star-crossed love affair, she had to establish contact with the show's creative team. "One day, I just plucked up my courage and called the *Beauty & the Beast* offices," she recalls. "I got George [R.R. Martin, the show's producer] and said, 'Let me introduce myself, my name is Wendy Pini.' He said, 'Oh, the *Elfquest* lady!' I was so delighted that he knew who I was because it really broke the ice. I told him how much I enjoyed his writing and what a breakthrough I thought *Beauty & the Beast* was for television."

This conversation ultimately led to an invitation to Hollywood where Martin gave Pini a tour of the studio. "While I was on the set, meeting the actors for the first time and seeing how incredibly well put-together the show was, how strong the idea behind the whole concept

Beauty & the Beast: Portrait of Love. Copyright 1988 First Publishing, Inc.





was—it made me feel *Beauty & the Beast* definitely had a life beyond television,” she remarks. “The characters had potential to exist in other mediums.”

“Almost as I was going out the door, I asked George if he thought Ron Koslow [the show’s executive producer/creator, *STARLOG* #130] would be open to the idea of a graphic novel based on the series. George said, ‘Why not give it a try?’ So I put together a proposal.”

It wasn’t until months later that Pini learned other parties were also interested in courting television’s most unusual couple. “It was at the San Diego Con in November ‘88. I found out First Comics was also thinking of acquiring the licensing to do *Beauty & the Beast* as a comic. One thing led to another and the graphic novel started there.”

The plot for her *Portrait of Love* grew from a scene in a first season episode called “The Children’s Story.” In it, Vincent had to identify a criminal he witnessed committing a crime, but being part-man part-beast, he can’t simply go down to police headquarters to file a complaint. “He sketches a picture of the man and gives it to the Tunnel children so that they can find the guy. Just the idea that Vincent draws, and draws well enough to get a photographic likeness so that somebody could identify the guy, really blew me away!”

“I thought, ‘Gee, he does all this wonderfully heroic stuff, and he draws too?! There’s no end to this guy!’ I filed that away for future reference and the graphic novel’s plot came as a result.”

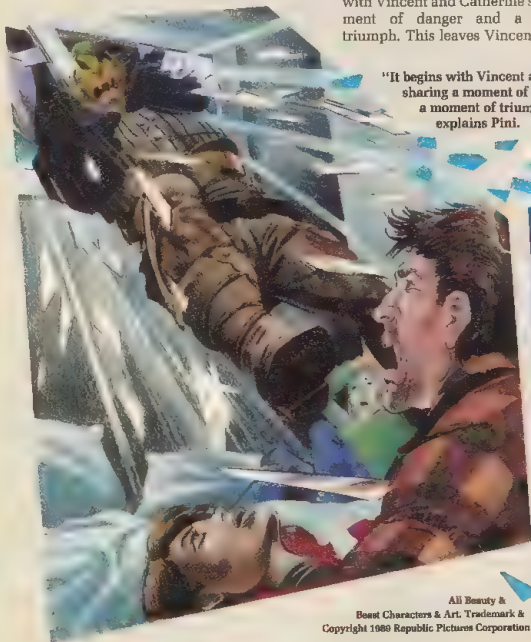
Reluctant to discuss the story in too much detail, she does reveal, “It begins with Vincent and Catherine sharing a moment of danger and a moment of triumph. This leaves Vincent with a very



powerful image of Catherine, something he sees in her that he hadn’t seen before, and he has this desire to capture it.

“He’s given encouragement by Elizabeth, a woman who paints in the Tunnels, to do Catherine’s portrait. He tries, but finds that he’s not satisfied with what he’s getting. He goes through a great deal of meditation and angst, and he’s trying to find out what’s missing from his work. He goes to Father’s library and discovers one of Paracelsus’s old journals, back when he was John Peters [before his misguided attempt to re-create

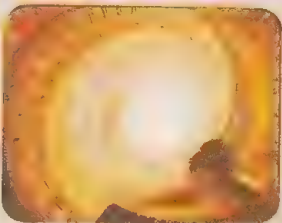
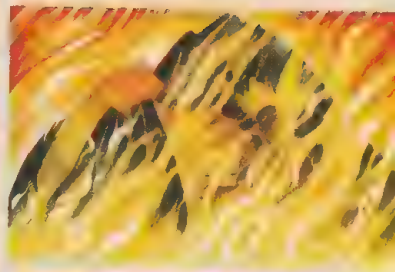
“It begins with Vincent and Catherine sharing a moment of danger and a moment of triumph,” explains Pini.



All *Beauty & the Beast* Characters & Art. Trademark & Copyright 1980 Republic Pictures Corporation



Pini kept the dialogue sparse. "They say so much with their eyes and their bodies that often, speech isn't necessary," she notes.



the Tunnel world in his own image]. Something in the writing of this old journal gives Vincent the spark of inspiration to go off and complete the portrait.

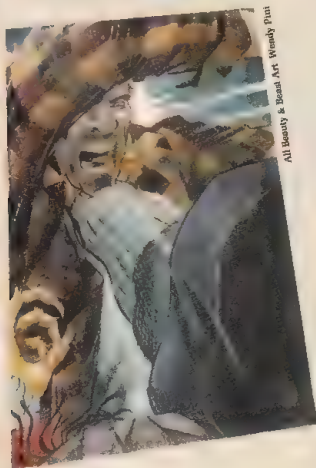
"Something about being so close in his own chamber, in the atmosphere he's so used to, is impeding his creativity," Pini explains. "He must go away by himself, and that's when he's able to create the portrait. Later, Paracelsus finds the portrait and actually falls in love with it, too. Because of that, he hates Vincent more than ever and seeks to destroy Vincent by use of the portrait."

In detailing some of the challenges that faced her in transposing the characters from the TV screen to the printed page, Pini reveals her empathy with Vincent.

"Personally, in writing for Vincent, there were a number of ways in which I could identify with him because I'm an adopted child myself. There's a strong feeling in the Tunnels of a tribal system where everybody is family down there. When you're adopted, you tend to make family anyone who comes into your circle. He is all the more interesting because no one knows exactly what his origin is, where he came from. Frankly, I hope they leave it that way. It would be a shame to pin the butterfly to the block of wood and examine it that closely.

"There's also a certain kind of musicality to the way Vincent talks. He's quite poetic, but at the same time, he uses words sparingly when he speaks. He says exactly what he needs to say. If he had to talk a lot and get all flowery, the character would become obnoxious. I wouldn't necessarily classify Vincent as the strong silent type. Whatever he says or does comes off stronger because he's very reserved about the things he *does* say."

Just the thought of Vincent being the prototype male of the '90s amuses Pini. "I don't think Vincent is a 'type' at all. There were specific conditions in his life that made him the way he is. He's so special and mysterious, and that must be there because it makes him all the more intrigu-



All Beauty & Beast Art: Wendy Pini

The graphic novel embellishes on Catherine and Vincent's first meeting. Pini will also be opening new doors to the Tunnels.



Ron Koslow, the show's creator, advised Pini not to let the relationship go any further than it has on TV.

ing. I find the episodes that make me most uncomfortable are the ones in which the characters talk too much about their feelings."

It is this respect for the way Linda Hamilton and Ron Perlman relate Catherine and Vincent's feelings that Wendy Pini attempts to bring to her own story. "They say so much with their eyes and with their bodies that often, speech isn't necessary. I would describe the graphic novel script as 'sparse.' They

speak in short dialogues with no long speeches. I'm trying to show a great deal of what the characters are like through facial expressions."

One aspect of the couple's relationship Pini wanted to examine more closely was how they would relate physically by the second season's finale, which would coincide with release of *Portrait of Love*.

"I asked if it was all right for me to show Vincent and Catherine kissing—has their relationship progressed to the point where they can do that freely? There was

a hesitation on Mr. Koslow's part. He said, 'Well...no. It would have to be a super-special occasion, and I would actually advise against that.' As much as Vincent may want to, I don't think for the time being, he'll ever grab Catherine in his arms and kiss her. There's that element of fear on his part that he might hurt her if he lets himself go."

One of the advantages of telling a fantasy in paint instead of on film is an essentially unlimited budget. Will Pini's version reveal any more of the Tunnels than the TV series can, considering the medium's economic restraints?

"Yes and no," she responds, explaining that "when you read the graphic novel, you feel like you're watching an episode that you're holding in your hands. I wouldn't say that I've gone that far beyond what it would be possible for them to do in terms of special FX. Much of the photo references I used came from the first season, and they've done some incredible new things in the second season that I've tried to incorporate where I could."

"They've expanded on the Whispering Gallery and on the Waterfall. They've added a Star Chamber and some fantastic new stuff. Wherever it was possible, because there's a lot of Tunnel imagery in the graphic novel, I tried to do something new and different that I think would be in keeping with what they would do if they were going to add a new effect or matte painting."

Considering her history as an essentially self-made storyteller, this variation on the creative process was a new experience for Pini. "I've been spoiled rotten in the past, and I freely admit it. I've had probably the most wonderful situation an artist can have. To be your own company and have your husband as your editor gives you absolute and total freedom in respect to your characters."

"For the first time in a long time, I was down there in the trenches like anyone else who has to wait on everybody else's decision before they can go ahead and start their work. It was a wonderful lesson in discipline and patience."

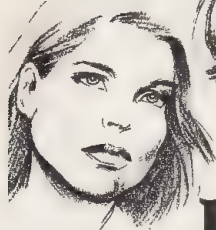
The future may include a second *Beauty & the Beast* graphic novel, once again giving her the opportunity to translate the characters millions of people know into a medium with a somewhat smaller audience.

"I've been doing *Elfquest* for over 10 years now, which has had its share of very exciting public exposure," Pini observes. "When you have the experience of going into Waldenbooks and seeing the collected volumes of your works on display right in front of the store—to know you did that—it's a feeling you never forget, you never outgrow it."

"But having had those experiences, I couldn't honestly say that going from that to *Beauty & the Beast* was that huge a

(continued on page 58)

Adopted children both,
Pini found a kindred
spirit in Vincent.



The importance of facial
expressions are seen in
these character sketches.

Views of Beauty and the Beast

By WENDI PINI

If *Portrait of Love*
is a success, the show's
survival may lie in
these graphic novels.



There's an elfin twinkle in Father's eyes.

Burton

(continued from page 39)

While Hamm worked on the script, Burton made *Beetlejuice*. That film's box office success meant the director was given the green light to make *Batman*. He went to Pinewood Studios in England (where the *Superman* films and most of the James Bond movies were made), and began pre-production. Then, there was more work on the script, involving Charles (Baron Munchausen) McKoewn (CS #6).

"Since I was over here in England, I was looking for somebody who could help me a little bit with the Joker, basically. Sam is the spirit of the script. He really structured it and made people say, 'OK, great, it's workable, we can see this, it feels real.' But just to tone it a little, I wanted to work on the Joker a bit, and Charles was very good about that. It was a bit of a fresh opinion, for myself and for the script. I had worked a long time with Sam on it. We had been through many different changes and things, and we had it to a spot where this was it."

Later still, script doctor Warren Skaaren, who co-wrote *Beetlejuice*, also worked on *Batman*. "It got a little crazy," Burton says. "I've never done a movie this big, and I've heard people tell me about what happens on them, and it makes sense, to a degree. The studio is putting up a great deal of money and therefore, everything, their fear level, their interest level, everything is heightened, sometimes I think a little bit too much. Everybody kept saying, 'It's a great script, but then on the other hand, it needs a lot of work.'"

"It's odd that a script can be so good and yet, there seemed to be a bit of a panic. The writers' strike didn't help anything because everything stopped, and I was just doing my own little things to it. Warren helped it, and he did some good things, but I think what happened is that it went too far overboard. We had a fair amount of pre-production on this movie, but when you're changing things at the last minute, pre-production doesn't necessarily mean a whole lot any more. It's like you might as well not have had the pre-production." Script changes were even made during shooting, with Burton and the lead actors rewriting scenes.

Five years after he first encountered the project, Tim Burton has now put *Batman* on the screen. What kept him going throughout was his love for the character. "I wasn't a giant comic-book fan, but I've always loved the images of the characters of *Batman* and the Joker," he says.

"I liked *Killing Joke* a lot. That's my favorite comic, because I find it the clearest and the simplest, and visually, it's beautiful. I would look at that one a lot. When I saw *The Killing Joke*, I felt it was the closest thing to what we were going to do in the movie."



Art: R.L. Puchner
Courtesy Will Murray

Black Bat

(continued from page 27)

was paid for what I did and that's all there was to it. I had no rights to the thing, no copyright. Everything was up to the publisher. If they wanted to promote it, they could have. But they never did."

However, in another bizarre twist of fate, the Black Bat later found greater success overseas than he did in America. When the German publisher Pabel decided to reprint the occasional Black Bat novel in their weekly *Kriminal-Roman* series, they discovered *Die Schwarzen Fledermaus*, as he was known in German, was so popular that in 1962, they retitled the weekly as *Fledermaus* and dropped the alternate characters.

"They took all of the Black Bats," Daniels explains, "and word for word, character for character, reprinted them. And when they exhausted those, they had writers do originals. They tell me—I can't believe it—they did 900 of them."

The German Black Bat was only slightly changed. Tony Quinn became a Chicago lawyer and in one 1967 novel, married Carol Baldwin. The series was modernized for the sexy 1960s, as the American-style titles like *H-Bombe in Blond*, *Playboys u. Blondinen* and *Der Killer kam im Smoking* suggest.

Not owning the copyright, Daniels received no royalties for the German incarnation of his character. He received no credit, either. The original series had appeared under the house pseudonym of G. Wayman Jones, which in Germany became G.W. Jones. Later, American-sounding pseudonyms like Fred Treath and Jerry Ford were appended to the series, which ran well into the 1970s and might even be going today.

Why did the Black Bat continue to hold his audience as the shadow of *Batman* gradually eclipsed him? Even the man who created him isn't sure.

"I couldn't put a finger on that," Norman Daniels admits. "I really don't know. I suppose it just hit the kids in the right way. It lasted for 11 years, so it must have been fairly good."

Beast

(continued from page 56)

step. It was a totally delightful creative experience and yet at the same time, it has been very familiar. The feeling that I got from Ron Koslow and the actors and crew on the set, the feeling I get just watching the show itself, it's all very familiar territory. *Beauty & the Beast* deals with many of the themes that I've been dealing with in *Elfquest* for many, many years."

Yet, she is willing to confess to a degree of excitement about how her graphic novel has had an impact on the series itself. So enamored were the show's producers of the cover painting of *Portrait of Love*, they set about writing a script involving it. In the episode, a mysterious young painter attempts to convince Catherine to pose for him. After she agrees to, however, she learns the struggling enthusiastic free spirit is just that—she has been dead for years.

"I got a thrill out of 'The Bluebird Sings,' which was co-written by George R.R. Martin and another writer. It was a funny feeling to have such a direct influence over the show in the sense that the portrait used on the episode, was an outgrowth of the graphic novel. It's my understanding that if the graphic novel didn't exist, the portrait wouldn't exist and so forth, she explains with a laugh. "So, to see it on television and realize that it was a nice, indirect plug for the graphic novel was exciting."

But despite all her obvious affection for the series, making assumptions that she's a fan of *Beauty & the Beast* prompts a cautious response from Pini. "I have dealt with fans for years, and while there are, of course, different kinds of fans, what I feel about being a fan of something is that oddly enough, it distances you from the thing you care so much about," she explains. "You don't see it clearly, you don't see it for what is is."

"Because 'fan' is an abbreviation of 'fanatic,' there have been many times when *Elfquest* fans have frustrated me because I see that in their obsession with *Elfquest*, they're not really getting it. They're not really getting the messages. So, I wouldn't really characterize myself as a 'fan' of the show. What I am is in complete agreement with the politics of *Beauty & the Beast*."

Stresses Wendy Pini, "My whole effort here is to pump energy into *Beauty & the Beast* because I support it. It's an absolute breakthrough for television. The characters are wonderful and solid and they deserve to be seen and loved for years to come. If the graphic novel contributes to the show's strength, if someone who hasn't watched the program sees the graphic novel on the stands and reads it and says, 'Hm, I better catch the show and see what this is all about,' I'll be very happy."

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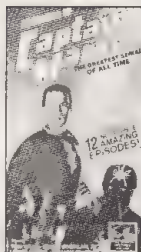
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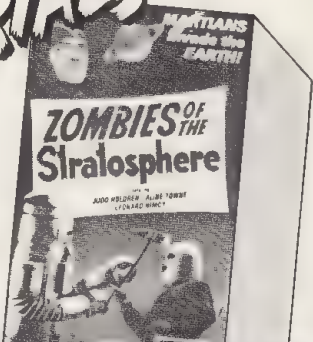
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Simonson

(continued from page 52)

and the Skull. On their own terms, they shouldn't sweat any more than the heroes do. That's the kind of a Doctor Doom I want to write—a Doctor Doom who is as self-assured under stress as he is when things are going his way."

Walt Simonson has built a reputation as an innovative storyteller, an artist whose design sense is a big part of his storytelling. He hopes to build on that foundation with *Fantastic Four*. "I'm hoping I can do a little more radical storytelling on *FF* than I did on *Thor*. I don't even know what that means, really. See me again when it's on paper, then I'll know," he says. "I did a little artsy storytelling in *X-Factor*, where I thought it called for it, but I didn't push it very hard. I'll likely do a little more of that on *FF*. As a series, it gets bound up in very technological stuff, which gives more of an opportunity for that kind of visuals. I would like to be a little more graphics-oriented on *FF* than I was on *Thor* in terms of telling the story. I want to bring *FF* into the '90s visually."

The first Simonson-written-and-illustrated issue of *Fantastic Four* is scheduled this month or next, although it could wind up being some three months later if Simonson's other assignments work out the way he plans. "Steve Englehart is still writing *FF* and Ralph tells me he's happy to wind things up and then leave," Simonson points out. "If there's anything I come up with that I want in place before I start, I'll talk to Steve about setting it up for me. I don't want to come in and have all the problems solved, because problems are what stories are made from. I don't want to start writing the book with all four members happy, married, with 2.3 kids and 3.4 cars in the garage. I can see some stuff already that I would like to explore."

Those other assignments include some work on a character Simonson has long admired, but never had the chance to handle before. "I'm scheduled to write, pencil and probably ink a *Superman* annual," he says enthusiastically. "It's the last annual in DC's line. 1989. I'm under contract to Marvel until May, so I can't begin work on the DC stuff until then. I've never done *Superman* in a story before. I've done individual drawings, puns and the like. I'm also writing a *Wolverine* annual for Marvel that Mike Mignola is doing to pencil. Klaus Janson and I are going to do a *Meltdown*-type format *Punisher* and *Daredevil* story for Epic. That'll probably be four issues, with me doing the writing and Klaus doing the art."

What does all this work mean to Walt Simonson? "Now, instead of goofing off this year as I had planned," he chuckles, "I have real work to do." **CS**



(continued from page 12)

Art. A. Feldstein

says, "a crossover between realism and fantasy." She has done all three of the first episodes, "and the next three to come, maybe, if they don't kill me first. This is the hardest work I've ever done. It's like doing two features at the same time, because they're all feature quality. Now that I've done this, maybe you can do features cheaper. Don't tell anybody." Mummy's the word, Ginny!

Nearby, I found Richard Donner wielding a whip over his crew of brain-dead zombies! One of whom, Terry Black, turned out to be the writer of "Dig That Cat... He's Real Gone," the wildest of the first three shows! I didn't rough up Black; his last name makes him OK in my bleeding book, and then again, he is over six feet tall!

Black admits he loves "goofy horror," so he fits right in! "I was chosen on the strength of *Dead Heat*. They gave me 50 Xeroxed copies of these EC stories and asked me to pick my favorite." In "Dig That Cat," Ulric the Undying has a great act. Before curious crowds, he allows himself to be killed, over and over again! And why not? He literally has the lives of a cat. "The guy dies nine times, which is perfectly ridiculous and yet there's a real nasty edge to it," Black grins!

Black grew up in the right manner, digesting EC Comics! "They share a view of the world having this horrific new aspect with dimensions we never before suspected, that the world is in some way even *ghastlier* than what you might have imagined out there in the shadows as a kid under the covers. The plots are very secondary to the sense of flavor."

In a big circus tent right inside this former warehouse, Robert (Batman) Wuhl is sitting on a big plastic horse, telling an audience to step right up and watch Ulric the Undying stretch his neck for your fun and edification! Sure enough, up there on

the gallows, Joe (Guido the Killer Pimp) Pantoliano, dressed in cowboy duds, is about to dangle from a noose! This is my idea of a real circus act!

After the scene is over, Donner spots me, and kicks me out! But he feels sorry, I guess, and later on comes over to yell an interview with me! "It's pretty damned faithful to the comic!" Donner booms! I guess he knows that in German "donner" means "thunder!" "I try to make it like the drawings. We're drawn to a 10mm lens because it gives you comic-book spreads. We all had these comics somewhere in our lives and most of us were influenced by them. I think we're all influenced by things we read as kids under blankets."

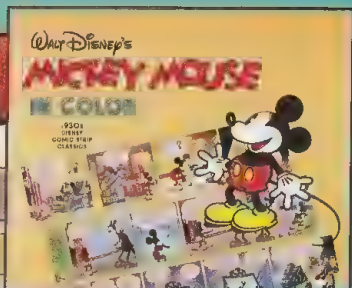
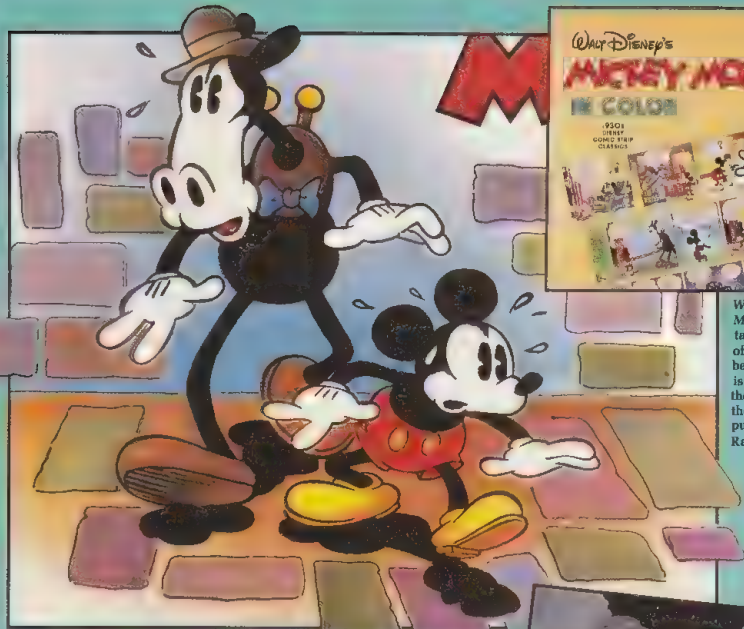
He's a busy guy, so "I couldn't go through them all and my memory as a kid in the '50s failed me, but the girls came up with 20-25 stories they felt were premium for us." But Donner's episode, unlike the other two, involves a crowd! "I could kill the girls who made me pick it."

"It has taken me eight days to do a half-hour show! In the old days, I did *Twilight Zone* in three days, so I'm not skimping. But you condition yourself to ways of making movies and it's difficult to go back. Especially a show like this. If it was a feature, it would have been a little bigger and more expensive and not on the stage, but I don't know what I would have shot differently. Had this gone to the networks, I would not have done it. We're going to see many more films made for cable without worrying about censorship or editorial privilege from advertisers. You take greater risks."

Donner is a large, friendly guy, immensely likable and open! The kind of guy you instinctively trust! That's why I was already beating my bicusps to get him to do another blood-coagulator from my private collection! However, he didn't take much coaxing! "We were only going to do the three, then Zemeckis called when he was done with him and said he wanted to do more, then Walter called Joel and said he wanted to do more. I went to Bill and said, 'If I have the spare time, I'll do more as well.' We're going to knock them down to six days. We're indulging ourselves at eight. We'll write the scripts to fit the budget, then you get the imagination of directors and say, 'That's your limitations, guys, now create.'"

As Donner went back to the set, I felt great, almost alive! But then I heard him say, "The *Crypt-Keeper* will end up with his own series, the little rat. He's going to leave us at the end of the third show—but we own the batteries." A rat, eh? Well, I know a lethal weapon or two myself, Dick Donner!

So there you have it, your slobbering ghoulunatics! A sneak preview of my favorite new TV series, *Tales from the Crypt*! Tell everyone about it, and be sure to be there, perched on your favorite headstone, for every one of these evil episodes! **CS**



Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse in Color* containing a collection of Gottfredson's work beautifully recolored is published by Pantheon Books. It follows the limited edition published by Another Rainbow.

Life with MICKEY

The late Floyd Gottfredson recalls his time with a great American mouse.

We met Floyd Gottfredson at the 1983 San Diego Comicon when he, and his publisher, Another Rainbow, came to promote the then-forthcoming republishing of the artist's best-known work. That work was, of course, Mickey Mouse.

It's a peculiarity of the American comics industry that a man can toil all his life and still sign someone else's name to his work. But Gottfredson's sheer genius in doing Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse eventually overcame the legal obscurity that had been cast over him, and which, one must say, he had gracefully accepted. In the end, to learned comic fans everywhere, through French reprints and Brazilian collections,

By **RANDY & JEAN-MARC LOFFICIER**

the name of Floyd Gottfredson has become virtually synonymous with that of the newspaper strip Mickey Mouse.

Gottfredson was born in 1905 in the railroad station of Kaysville, Utah, the grandson of the town's station agent. His early comics favorites were *Krazy Kat* and *Wash Tubbs*. Below, in this previously unpublished interview, he explains how he came to work for Walt Disney. Gottfredson's talents are presently showcased in an acclaimed collection, *Mickey Mouse in*

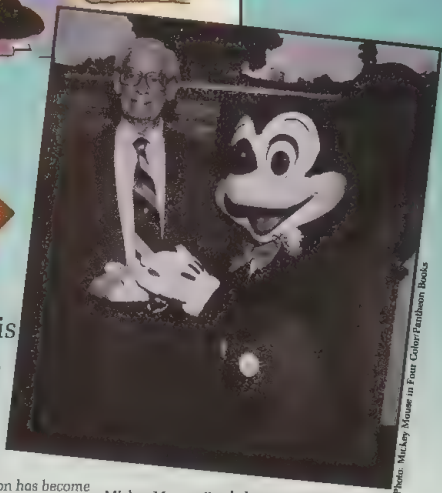


Photo: Mickey Mouse in Four Color Pantheon Books

Mickey Mouse attended a 1982 Christmas Party honoring Floyd Gottfredson.

Color (Pantheon!/Another Rainbow, \$39.95)—from which these illustrations were taken. The volume, which features Gottfredson's best work as colored by noted comics colorists, is highly recommended, a "must" for any Disney fan's library.

When we met the artist, we discovered that, like many true geniuses, Floyd Gott-



All Mickey Mouse Art: Floyd Gottfredson

fredson (who died in 1986) was neither humble, nor arrogant. He had the natural simplicity, and the courtesy, that so many great artists share. Plus, perhaps, a love of his work and a sense of dedication that undoubtedly help explain why his Mickey Mouse strip still towers like a giant over the history of comics.



COMICS SCENE: How did you become involved with Walt Disney?

FLOYD GOTTFREDSON: I went to work there in December 1929, as the result of meeting a fellow in what they called "Film Row" in Los Angeles. I was working in a small theater as a projectionist, and they decided to run Third Street through the area where the theater was. So, they tore it down and about six months after I went to work there!

I was down on Film Row, looking for another job as a projectionist, and I passed this small film exchange which had a billboard of Mickey Mouse sitting out in front. I had never seen nor heard of Mickey Mouse, although I was a projectionist. So, I went in and talked to the fellow, and he said he had heard that Walt Disney was going back to New York to hire artists the following week.

I rushed home, got my small portfolio and went out, and Walt hired me right

Written by Ted Osborne and pencilled by Gottfredson, the Mouse is agghast when he discovers he'll be required to hold up and rob fat travelers in the name of Robin Hood for this 1937 Sunday page feature.

away. He asked me what form of cartooning I preferred, and I said, "Newspaper comic strip." He said, "I wouldn't get into that if I were you. It's a rat race and the money's no good. Animation is where it is." I said, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, I'll be glad to go into animation."

I went into that for about four months. I guess, Walt had been having a fight with the fellow who had been drawing the Mickey Mouse strip, which was four months old then. Walt had been writing it at the time, and he wanted to get out from under it. So, he finally called this guy into his office and told him he wanted him to take over the writing as well. The guy refused, came stomping out to my desk and said, "I guess you got a new job." I asked him what that was and he told me I said, "What did you want to go and do that for?" He said, "No G.D. young whippersnapper is going to tell me what to do!" He walked out into oblivion, and the young whippersnapper became Walt Disney.

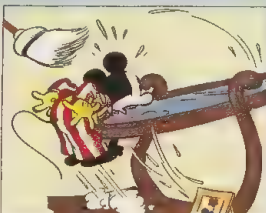
At the end of a month, I began to wonder if Walt was looking for an artist. At the end of two months, I was beginning to be afraid that he was, because I was beginning to like it again. I stayed on the thing for 45½ years before I retired.

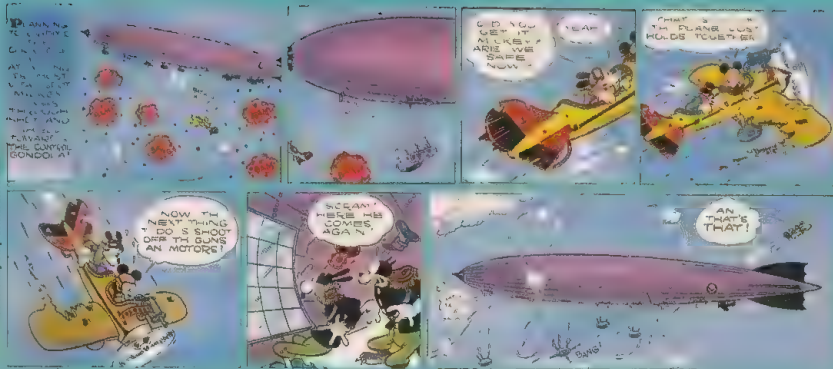
CS: What kind of a man was Disney? **GOTTFREDSON:** He was a very nice guy. Great sense of humor, great actor,

great storyteller, and he planned great stories. He was a man with sort of a one-track mind. When he got his mind on a subject, it stayed there until he got what he finally wanted. One thing you didn't say to him was, "Walt, you can't do this." Because he really told you off then. Otherwise, he was a fine guy.

CS: Why didn't he let people sign their names on the strips? Why was it always signed by Walt Disney?

GOTTFREDSON: Believe it or not, he proposed that we sign the strips. He en-





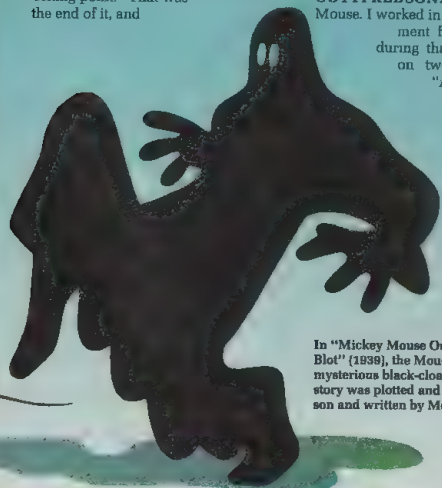
Some of the early '30s adventures were inspired by Disney shorts. "The Mail Pilot" (1933) draws part of its storyline from the Disney cartoon of the same title. In this thriller, Peg-Leg Pete and Sylvester Shyster pilot a dirigible capable of swallowing up Mickey's plane.

quired through King Features Syndicate, and they threw up their hands in horror and said, "No way! It would dilute the value of the strip. Your name is part of the selling point." That was the end of it, and

we didn't care one way or the other.

CS: Before you worked on the strip, did you actually work on some of the early Mickey Mouse cartoons?

GOTTFREDSON: Not on Mickey Mouse. I worked in the animation department for four months, and during that period, I worked on two Silly Symphonies, "Autumn" and "Jungle Drums."



In "Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot" (1939), the Mouse tries to track down a mysterious black-cloaked criminal. The story was plotted and pencilled by Gottfredson and written by Merrill de Maris.

CS: When you took over the strips, what characters other than Mickey had been created by Disney? How free were you to build your own?

GOTTFREDSON: Minnie, Pegleg Pete, Pluto, Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar were the ones that Walt had created. I was completely free to create my own characters, which I did. Some of them lasted a while, others lasted for quite a while. That was about what it was. I didn't really create any characters that lasted any great length of time until Eega Beeva came along. Bill Walsh, the great writer who wrote screenplays and produced pictures like *Mary Poppins* and *That Darn Cat*, conceived Eega Beeva and his dog, and then I worked up the design on them.

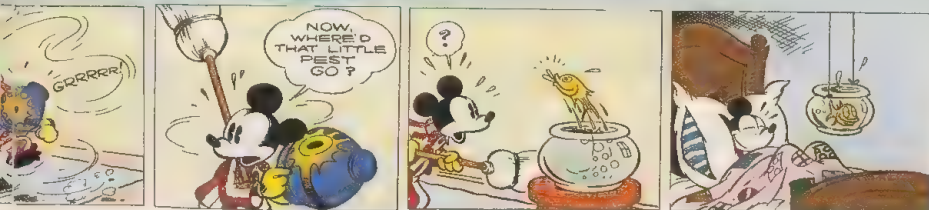
CS: What was your favorite character?

GOTTFREDSON: Well, of course Mickey was. And the main Disney characters such as Minnie and Pegleg Pete, Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar. Beyond that, Eega Beeva was my favorite.

CS: Of all the designs that Mickey has had over the years, why do you think the early '30s look is still the most popular?

GOTTFREDSON: I don't know that. Personally, with me, it's not. I think he's stiff and awkward. As the years passed, we kept trying to evolve him and streamline

This Mouse bit, written and pencilled by Gottfredson for the Sunday page of July 9, 1933, has its roots in fast-paced cartoon action, but its climax works best in a comics panel.





Actually, it wasn't Minnie, but Walt Disney himself who drove Mickey to the brink of suicide. Gottfredson, though, "never liked it."

him, because that's the way animation was going. The characters that were streamlined animated the best. We liked them the best, they had the best appearance as far as we were concerned.

CS: Did you get any kind of feedback from the syndicate, about what kind of story was popular with the readers?

GOTTFREDSON: On the whole, we didn't. We had one very stiff objection to one story we did when Mickey was in Blaggard Castle, and trying to get across the alligator pit. He had the stick that they fed them with and started to vault across. He got halfway across and the stick broke. We ended the week there. We got a hot wire from the syndicate demanding that we wipe that week out because women and children didn't like reptiles. So, I sent a telegram to Walt. He asked me what we did and how we solved it. I told him. He said, "That sounds great to me. I'll wire them and tell them to keep it in." He did that, and that's the only squabble that we had with them in all that time.

CS: Were there any changes in the way you did things after Walt Disney died?

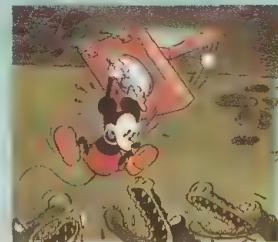
GOTTFREDSON: There was no change on the strip. Naturally, the animation gradually suffered more than anything else. He wasn't there anymore and he was a real innovating spark. There was no real change with the strip because he had nothing to do with it to start with.

CS: How many people worked on the strip? Did you ink your own stuff?

GOTTFREDSON: I inked for the first two years, then I got an inker. I had half-a-dozen of them through the years. The last 14 years, I inked it myself again. Other than that, there was just the writer and the general managing editor for the



The syndicate wanted the entire alligator sequence deleted from "Blaggard Castle," feeling that "women and children didn't like reptiles." But Walt Disney liked the tone of the adult adventure stories and refused to allow the changes.



department and myself

CS: Did you meet with Carl Barks?

GOTTFREDSON: Yes, I knew him when he worked at the studio in 1942 and when he had to leave because of his sinus trou-

ble. I have also met him several times since then, because of our association with Another Rainbow Publishing.

CS: Did you ever want to do your own strip?

GOTTFREDSON: Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, I tried it several times. But it's a very hard thing to get into. The syndicate came to Disney for Mickey Mouse, once the pictures became popular. That gave me an easy break in the business, which I would never have had otherwise.

CS: Did you make up Mickey's two nephews?

GOTTFREDSON: No. They were created in the movies, and then we brought them into the strip. Then, they figured that the extra nephew became cumbersome, so we saved the extra nephew, Mortie, principally because originally Walt wanted to call Mickey Mortie and his wife didn't like that.

CS: Did Walt actually have any input into story ideas for the strip?

GOTTFREDSON: No. Only one series, shortly after I took over. He suggested that we have Mickey try to commit suicide for a week, which I did, and we got some laughs out of it. But I never liked it and argued with him at the start. He said, "Go ahead, it has a lot of possibilities." But it only lasted a week. That's the only story he ever suggested.

CS: Why do you think that Mickey Mouse is so popular?

GOTTFREDSON: I don't know, except that he was a good little Boy Scout type, which was always popular. He was cute, responsive, solved his own problems and protected Minnie all the time. He had all those qualities that I think people liked and always will like.

During the '30s, Mickey was a tough, steel-gutted serial adventure hero who bears little similarity to the bland, suburbanized goodie-two-shoes who hosted the '50s TV show. In this strip from "Phantom Blot," the Mouse is bound and drugged. A noose goes around his neck and he's placed on a high rafter so that when Mickey awakes, he'll hang himself. It was typical of the fiend's elaborate murder traps.



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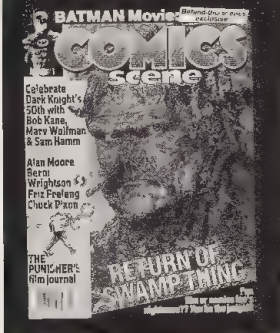
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Hawkworld

(continued from page 16)

believed them to be when he was living in the towers. The alien cultures that they've always gotten their goods, materials and even culture from, aren't being treated as fairly as the P.R. in the upper towers led them to believe. Katar sees that the society in which he has always wanted to become a great hero might not be worth having a hero.

"In the second issue, Katar turns into a very bitter person, and becomes addicted to drugs. He's the roc that has gone to its nest and hasn't quite become a phoenix.

"And in the last issue, he pulls himself up by his bootstraps and realizes what he can do to become the hero that he always wanted to be, even though he doesn't necessarily want to become a hero now. Part of becoming a hero is not wanting to be a hero. So, he doesn't end the series as the same person he was when it began," says Truman.

Argentine artist Alcatena is inking Truman's pencils on all three issues, and Truman says he is a collaborator in every sense of the word, with each of them trying to add as much as possible. Thanks to Federal Express, communication hasn't proven difficult, nor has language, as Truman and Chuck Dixon's 4Winds group has been working with several Argentine artists. Truman says Alcatena is such a great artist in his own right, with projects including the upcoming *SubTerra*, that he was a bit uncomfortable asking him to ink *Hawkworld*. Seeing Alcatena's inks on *The Moving Fortress* changed Truman's mind, however.

"There are certain patterns that he lays down with greys and blacks that are similar to my way of thinking. I thought, 'Man, he could add this outrageous, rococo feel to *Hawkworld* with his inks.' We found out we all speak the same language!"

Hawkworld represents Truman's first series work for a non-independent publisher, but he says he would do more if it's successful. "I negotiated for a real tough contract on this book, and got a lot of stuff I don't think DC has ever given away before. So, another series would all really depend on the contract and situation. I could never commit my life to a corporate-owned character, though I could do four or six issues and flesh out a concept I've already established. But, I've also got many of my own characters on whom I could be spending time."

The most important reason for doing *Hawkworld*, however, had little to do with contracts. "If I were 80 years old and lying on my deathbed, and I hadn't done this, I would say, 'I should have done that Hawkman story for Gar!'" Confesses Tim Truman. "That would have been one of the last regrets of my life."

Titans

(continued from page 24)

York a couple of times a year, we work out the next five or six issues, how we want to change it, any high points we want to do, and then George [who also supplies the page breakdowns] worries about the little stuff."

One detail that has yet to be worked out is just which of the two will ultimately handle the Titans' twin title, *Titans West*.

"We'll probably do the first issue together whenever that finally comes about. Then, depending on George's schedule, he may take over the book."

"I didn't want another young superhero book," Wolfman notes. "The concept that I had come up with was more of a rescue group—not another bunch of policemen running out and stopping crime—working out of San Francisco. Just before George returned, I set up the San Francisco branch of S.T.A.R. Labs as a place where they're testing super-people. We had Red Star and Thunder and Lightning out there, and some other characters that we were going to introduce. When the Titans West, or whatever it's finally called, is formed, they'll operate out of that, and there will be positive charter in the helping in disastrous situations."

"Now that I'm coming back as a writer in my mind after a couple of years where I wasn't too pleased with everything, I don't want to overdose on Titans. I want to really enjoy what I'm writing so that each issue, when I sit down, I can approach it at the strongest, as opposed to saying, 'Oh, no. Another Titans story.' So, if George decides at some point not to write *Titans West*, at least it'll be so completely different from *Titans* that I wouldn't be bored."

Nor, promises Wolfman, will the title's followers be bored with all the unexpected upsets in the lives of the established group's membership. Yet, with even more dramatic alterations to follow the *Games* that Wolfman and Perez insist the Titans play, some may wonder if the co-plotters, along with penciller Tom Grummett and inker Bob McLeod, are tampering too much with what first set the series apart from the throngs of other team books.

"At first, fans probably won't like anything. Of course, people like the status quo, but at the same time, if we do what we're going to do well, they'll like it. Also, we're not changing the book's tone. It's not like the last time we changed it, and made the book real heavy and dark and defeatist in attitude. The *New Titans* is not going in that direction." Says Marv Wolfman, "Titans is still going to be the title I hope people will like and have been coming back to and are discovering is good again."

Comic Screen

These characters are bound for another medium. All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk have changed status since last listing. **Attr:** comics & media **pros:** Clarifications and other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr. NY NY 10016

* **The Adjuster.** Character from Marvel & Columbia Pictures TV Apparently dead.

The Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters. Animated series. Rankin-Bass, producers.

The Airtight Garage. Moebius' SF graphic novel. Animated film from Productions Pascal Blais & Starwatcher Graphics.

* **The American Movie.** Meltzer/Helfern, producers.

American Flag! Movie. * **Annie.** Separate movie & Broadway musical sequels. Movie delayed, to film April 1990. Lewis Gilbert, director. Musical will reteam original's creators Charles Strouse, Tom Meehan & Martin Charnin.

* **Ant-Man.** Movie still alive May not be Henry Pym character or costumed hero.

* **Archie.** Movie *Archie & Veronica*. Warner Bros. Script: Jeff Boam. Joel Schumacher, director. *Archie:* Corey Haim. Also TV movie for NBC fall 1989. Exec producers: Tom Patchett, Andy Heyward. Animated *Archie's 3000* series possible.

The Avengers. Not comics heroes: John Steed. Mel Gibson may star. Script: Sam Hamm.

Babar. *Babar The Movie* Animated. July 1989 premiere.

* **Batman Movie.** Warner Bros. Script: Sam Hamm. Tim Burton, director. *Batman:* Michael Keaton. Joker: Jack Nicholson. Debuts this month (see article).

Beetle Bailey. Movie. Also animated TV special. Script: Hank Saroyan.

Blackhawk. Film. **Blade.** Movie based on Tomb of Dracula character at New World. Script: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin. Still "active."

James Bond. New 007 film, *License to Kill*, opens July.

Betty Boop. Movie. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer may direct.

Blondie. CBS animated special * **Brenda Starr, Reporter.** Movie starring Brooke Shields & Timothy Dalton. Fall release

Bugs Bunny. Bugs Bunny & Tweety airs on ABC Saturdays. Tiny Toons. New TV series teaming Steven Spielberg & Warner Bros. features young Warner characters. Debuts fall 1990.

Bullwinkle Boris & Natasha. A live-action comedy, with Sally

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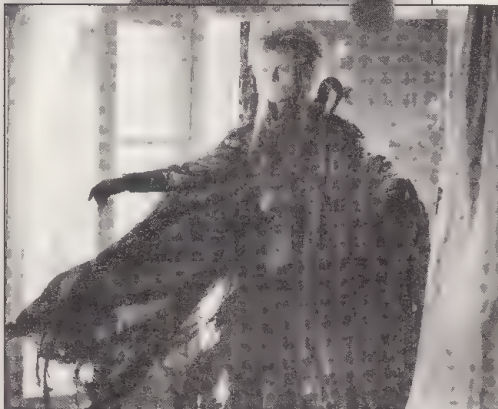
Under Mandrake's Spell

Lee Falk's 1934 comic-strip creation, *Mandrake the Magician*, first hit movie screens via a 1939 Columbia Pictures serial starring Warren Hull (who also donned the cowl and cape of *The Spider*, Master of Men in two other Columbia serials). Since then, despite strong interest in reviving his exploits for the screen, the character has lingered in cinematic limbo while producers procrastinated over various scripts and budgets. Among those who penned proposed scripts were Lee Falk and William Hjortsberg (who discussed his version in CS #1).

However, if several of the comics-oriented films being released this summer hit big, *Mandrake* could be on his way to movie theaters. Director Julien Temple, whose *Earth Girls Are Easy* opened this spring, has been entranced by *Mandrake* for some time. De Laurentis Entertainment Group showed an interest, but as Temple explains, "It was an expensive project. The studio got into financial problems with that and decided they couldn't do it."

Temple's screenplay incorporated several aspects of the Lee Falk script which itself underwent many changes and rewrites. But without DEG's backing, is his project dead? "Oh, no," says Temple

For his next trick, David Bowie may transform himself into Mandrake the Magician.



emphatically. "In fact, David Bowie and I were talking about it recently. I think he would be an interesting Mandrake, and I certainly would love to do it."

For Temple, the *Mandrake* character is the very essence of film. "It's like the beginning of cinema with the illusions," says the director. "When the cinema was a fairground media, an almost hyp-

notic new invention, many of those old magicians tried to buy up the rights to it and present it as a magic trick. So, it really is the spirit of cinema, the illusion of motion, hypnotists and hypnosis. I would like to see *Mandrake* in 3-D. I love 3-D. Although it can cause all kinds of problems, it also offers all kinds of challenges."

—Dan Scoppertotti

Kellerman & Dave Thomas. Script: Charles Fradette. Charles Martin-Smith, director. Due out fall '89. Video release of *Bullwinkle* begins late '89.

* **Captain America.** Musical. Dead. "Too expensive." Movie may start shooting shortly. (see item).

* **Cathy.** Animated TV specials on CBS. TV ads now running. * **The Chameleon.** New hero created by Stan Lee for TV. Will probably appear in a Hulk TV movie.

Charlie Chan. Movie.

* **Chip & Dale.** Animated series, *Rescue Rangers*, already airs on Disney Channel. Debuts in syndication this fall.

Conan. Sequel in limbo.

Cracked. Superhero parody movie in development.

Crossfire. TV pilot. ABC

* **Daredevil.** Introduced in *Trial of Incredible Hulk*. DD: Rex Smith. Bill Bixby, director. Series possible? (see item).

Deathlok. Movie. New World.

Delta Tenn. TV series to star Shannon Tweed in works

* **Dick Tracy.** Movie.

Touchstone. Warren Beatty, director & star. Cast: Al Pacino, Madonna. Summer '90 release

DNAgents. Movie. UA.

Doc Savage. Movie.

Dr. Strange. Movie. Script:

Bob Gale. Looking for producer.

* **Elquest.** Movie. (see item).

* **Fantastic Four.** Movie. Neue

Constantin. Bernard Eichinger,

producer. (see item).

* **Felix the Cat.** Animated film

New World. Due out July

* **The Flintstones.** Movie. Script:

Steven de Souza. Joel Silver, producer. Still "alive." *Flintstone*

Mandrake the Magician: Copyright 1985 Tri-Star Pictures Company Inc.

Cutter, Skywise, Lestah & friends still haven't escaped Hollywood limbo to begin their *Elfquest*.



Illustration Art: By & Copyright 1982 Wendy Pini

Why No "Elfquest"?

It's ironic. *Elfquest* creator Wendy Pini is currently bringing the adventures of Catherine and Vincent, TV's *Beauty & the Beast*, to comics (see page 53). But her own creation, *Elfquest*, has encountered countless obstacles on its path to the screen.

"We've been trying to get *Elfquest* turned into an animated film for quite a few years now," Wendy Pini says. "The general problem that we run into has to do with the way that animation is done in this country. Not that much of it is done in this country, most of it is farmed out to the Orient, but it's produced here. The prevailing attitude is that you must be connected to a toy company in some way."

"When *Elfquest* was in development at CBS, as a Saturday morning cartoon show a few years back, one of the things that 'killed it,' or made it not go through, is that we couldn't really pigeonhole *Elfquest* as a toy property. The toy companies were very frustrated with it. They kept asking, 'What is this? Is it

for boys or girls... and for what age group?' We kept saying, '*Elfquest* is for everybody and it's for every age group. There's no distinction between boys and girls.' This made it difficult for the toy licensors because in their thinking, it has to be either for a boy or a girl."

"If it's for a boy, it has to be an action figure or have lots of gimmicks and mechanics and things like that. If it's for a girl, it has to be soft and squishy and cuddly. That kind of thinking is so rigid that they were unable to see *Elfquest*'s potential to be both. They could probably do action figures based on our characters, but then they could also do soft cuddly dolls as well. It was too complicated for the toy companies and that has been *Elfquest*'s main problem all along."

Another obstacle is subject matter. Epic fantasies, whether live action or animation, whether low-budget or big-scale, whether well-made or not, seldom score screen success.

"I suspect that *Elfquest* has the same problem that other fantasy epics have had in the marketplace," Pini observes. "When [Ralph Bakshi's] *Lord of the Rings* came

out, they had great difficulty licensing anything. Some figurines came out, but that was it. Epic fantasy, apparently, doesn't necessarily lend itself easily to film."

"And I understand how [series creator] Ron Koslow feels about licensing *Beauty & the Beast*. If someone comes up to him and says, 'OK, you can make a million dollars from this, but we're going to put Vincent on a surfboard and sunglasses and have him sell soft drinks,' I can certainly understand why he would say no to that. It's pretty hard to pitch fantasy. It requires much more thought and much more care than cops and robbers stuff or G.I. Joe."

"We've been everywhere with *Elfquest*—we've been to Disney and to various other TV producers and so forth—and the typical response is 'This is too complicated. We would have to make changes all over the place.' The changes they would make would make it not *Elfquest* anymore. Until we can find someone who's willing to do something that's true to what *Elfquest* is, we're just going to hold off on making it a film."

—Scott Lobdell

Brooke Shields, "Starr" Reporter

For the past 40 years, Brenda Starr, that most daring and beautiful reporter, has been thrown out of airplanes, caught in blazing infernos, and pursued by psychotic killers, all to get a sensational scoop. Now, she faces her deadliest peril—the transition from comic strip to movie screen.

Walking in Brenda's high heels and high fashion, is actress/model Brooke Shields. "When I first told some of my friends that I was playing Brenda, it was misinterpreted," she relates. "People were saying, 'Oh, you're playing some superehero,' and I was so aggravated. She's not a superhero in the sense that she doesn't fly around or do anything supernatural. Brenda is a real person. The way she gets in and out of these situations is purely her own invention, purely by her own intelligence and her own sharp wits."

She's certainly going to need all her wits about her to survive Brenda Starr. Reporter. The movie, set in 1947, begins with Brenda capturing a notorious gangster, as well as a scoop for her paper, *The Flash*, and then heads down to South America. There, she races against a professional rival and Russian agents to reach a former Nazi scientist who now possesses a secret formula that can change the course of human events.

On hand to help Brenda Starr out of trouble is her dashing love interest, played by the new James Bond, Timothy Dalton.

But will there be too much excitement for Shields to handle? "I love action packed films," she replies. "I think they're fun to watch. They're definitely exciting to be in. They're a bit dangerous to do, I mean, more dangerous than some of the other films that I've been in, but I like that. I'm always going to want to do my own stunts."

Kids cancelled

• **Garfield** Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends*, on CBS will expand to an hour this fall.

• **The Green Hornet**, Movie For Tatt Entertainment/Kent/Bavaria.

• **Green Lantern** Movie Joel Silver, producer. Being written.

• **He-Man**. New version of animated series in development.

• **The Incredible Hulk**. Next NBC TV movie airs this fall.

• **Indiana Jones**. Sequel in release. Also comic book.

• **Iron Man**. Character may be introduced in Hulk TV movie. May be done as a solo Iron Man

in a

• **The Jetsons**. Animated film. HB 11 universa, fall release.

• **Jonny Quest**. Syndicated animated series. Live-action movie at Fred Dekker, writer/director for Tatt Entertainment/Kent/Bavaria Productions.

• **Judge Dredd**. Movie Script. Tim Hunter & James Crumley. Hunter, however, has left the project as director. Charles Lippincott, producer.

• **Kaptein Keen & ko**. Planned animated series. Rankin Bass.

• **Li Abner**. Media revival. Dave Beil & Herbert Krosney,

producers, plan animated series. TV specials & music.

• **Little Nemo in Slumberland**. Animated feature. IMs Entertainment. Summer release.

• **The Lone Ranger**. TV revival?

• **Lone Wolf & Cub**. Movie. Edward Pressman producer.

• **Luke Cage & Iron Fist**. Movie. New World Script. Michael Jarrover. Absolutely "dead."

• **MacDoodle Street**. Movie. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's Village Voice weekly comic strip.

• **MAD Magazine**. CBS-TV special from Hanna Barbera

Also series pilot.

• **Mat the Psychic Girl**. Movie. Optioned by writer/producer Larry Wilson. Co-producer Walter Hill. With Carolco.

• **Mandrake**. Movie. May not be dead after all. (see item).

• **Mickey Mouse**. New animated shorts in works.

• **Mighty Mouse**. Animated series canceled.

• **Mr. Jigsaw**. Ron Fortner-Gary. Gross character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

• **Mr. Magoo**. Movie. Steven Tisch, producer.

• **My Secret Identity**. Syndicated



Reporting as **Brenda Starr** is actress Brooke Shields.

Guiding her through those danger zones is Robert Ellis Miller, director of *Reuben, Reuben* and the TV movie *Intimate Strangers*. For him, *Brenda Starr* is a change of pace from the smaller, personal films for which he's noted. "This project intrigued me," he says. "I haven't done it before. It's a lot of fun for me to do. A lot of work, but a lot of fun."

The person most excited about the new film may be Dale Messick, the creator of *Brenda Starr* who worked on the strip for 43 years. While she believes that Brooke Shields is perfect for the part, saying, "She's tall, she's beautiful and with the red hair, she's going to look just like Brenda," Messick had another actress in mind when she created the character.

"I patterned her after Rita Hayworth," Messick reveals. "She was the top glamour girl of the 1940s. And I got Brenda Starr's name from Brenda Frazier, the number one debutante of that time. In fact, I had never heard the name 'Brenda' until then."

Although the film's release was delayed for almost two years by legal entanglements, Dale Messick is still looking forward to it. Will they do her creation justice? "Well, I hope so," she says. "If they don't, I'll come in and do it myself."

—Daniel Dickoltz

Kingpin or Lynchpin?

Daredevil fans who watched the recent NBC-TV movie, *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk*, might have found the villain, played by Welsh character actor John (Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade) Rhys-Davies, strangely familiar. Rhys-Davies played the formidable master criminal, Wilson Fisk. Everyone knows that Fisk is the real name of Daredevil's perennial opponent, the Kingpin. But the comic-book Kingpin is completely bald, while this Wilson Fisk was not. Was the TV character really meant to be the Kingpin, or just another crime lord named Wilson?

"Well, much to my remorse," Rhys-Davies explains, "I didn't realize that my character was based on the character called the Lynchpin—I beg your pardon, the Kingpin. That shows you how many comics I've read. He wasn't called the Kingpin in the story. Had I known, I would have either not done the job, or I would have made other contractual commitments. I was expecting to have a contract immediately afterwards which involved me keeping my hair. And we couldn't get a satisfactory bald wig set up in time because I had come straight from another job. So, we made him look different."

"I got there," Rhys-Davies continues, "and Bix [director Bill Bixby] said, 'I can't get you to take your hair off, can I?' And I said, 'Well, let's take a look.' My agent went mad and we were having contractual problems with the next one, and I said, 'If you can spare it, don't.' I did say to him, 'Look, if you really have to, I'll do it for you.' But he said, 'No, it's not worth that much trouble. We're doing our own impression. We're changing other factors in the Daredevil stories anyway.'"

Many actors might not let such a minor concession as hair bother them. Not the conscientious Rhys-Davies, who may be best known for playing Indiana Jones' sidekick, Sallah.

"I feel that I've short-changed people," he says sincerely. "All I can say is that the character was not meant to be the Kingpin, but I think he clearly would develop into the Kingpin should we ever continue. It may be that he'll have to disguise himself, having gotten away from Daredevil. It was just one of these things that everyone had overlooked. He wasn't called the Kingpin and no one had ever said I wouldn't have hair in this film. But he is a master of crime." Rhys-Davies adds, chuckling his appreciation for the character.

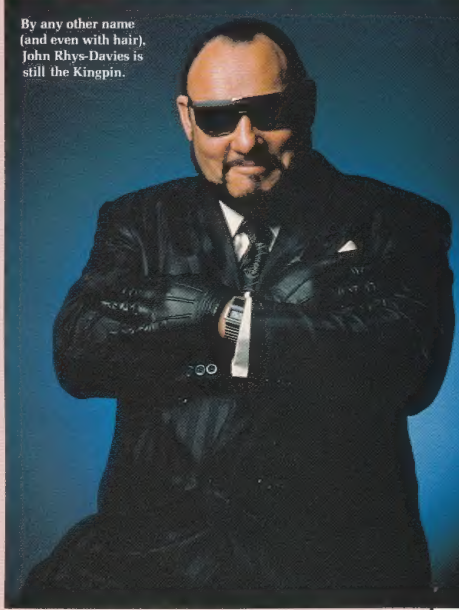
If the hoped-for Daredevil TV series spins off from *The Trial of the*

Incredible Hulk, Wilson Fisk—probably sans hair—is certain to return. But will Rhys-Davies?

"I can't say that I really would like to spend the rest of my life in any piece of television," John Rhys-Davies admits. "I'm not contractually obliged to, but assuming that it did become a series, I would have no problem doing three or four or five episodes a year. I rather like entertaining children. It's fun. But I really don't see myself settling down and playing a comic-book character like the Kingpin irredeemably forever."

—Will Murray

By any other name (and even with hair), John Rhys-Davies is still the Kingpin.



Trial of Incredible Hulk. Photo: Paul Drinkwater/Copyright 1988 NBC, Inc.

sitcom with *Ultraman* renewed. **Nancy.** *Nancy The Movie*. Character is to be seen in her 30s, reunited with Sluggo. Peter Muller, producer.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Movie. Debra Hill & Lynn Obst, producers. Stephen Herok, director. Script: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Movie. Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price, producers. Script: Ken Shadine. Phantom creator Lee Falk is consulting.

Plastic Man. Movie. Joe Dante may direct. Separate scripts by Charles Gals & Joe Laifu. In development at Guber-Peters.

*** The Punisher.** Movie. Dolph Lundgren, Lou Gossett & Jerroen Krabbe star. Mark Goldblatt, director. (see article)

Radio Boy. Animated.

Reid Fleming. World's

Toughest Milkman. Movie. May star Jim Belushi. Script: creator David Boswell. Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II, producers.

*** RoboCop.** Sequel. Script: Frank Miller. Tim Hunter, director.

Filming begins in August. Peter Weller & Nancy Allen return.

Animated Marvel Universe segment may spin off its own solo *RoboCop* series.

The Rocketeer. Movie. Disney. Bill Dear, director. Script: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo.

*** Roger Rabbit.** New animated short "Tummy Trouble." Second short, "Rollercoaster Rabbit," in works.

Sally Forth. Universal sitcom. **Sgt. Preston of the Yukon.**

TV revival projected.

*** Sgt. Rock.** Movie. Rock: Bruce Willis. John McTiernan, director.

Joel Silver, producer. Steven de Souza is rewriting script.

*** The Shadow.** Movie. Script: Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer. Not dead.

*** The She-Hulk.** Will co-star in Hulk TV movie to air fall, NBC. *** Spider-Man.** Cannon movie. Now looking for new script. Animated Marvel Universe segment.

*** Sub-Mariner.** Movie. Storyline: Namor comes to surface to avenge Atlantis' destruction. Would partially film in North Carolina on sets used for *Abyss*. *** Superboy.** Half-hour syndicated

For Captain America fans, there's good news and bad news.

The bad news is that Marvel has finally abandoned their long-planned Broadway musical version of the life of a middle-aged star-strangled avenger who comes out of retirement to rescue the first female president of the United States. Citing spiraling production costs, Marvel Comics Publisher Stan Lee recently pronounced the decade-old project "dead."

"Marvel was going to produce it," Lee explains. "All we had to do was raise the money. We felt it could be done as a musical like *Man of La Mancha* for about \$1.5 million. By the time the company got \$1.5 million, it cost two million. We finally raised two million. By then, it cost three million. I spoke to Marvel a week ago, and asked, 'What's happening with the show?' They told me, 'Stan, we can't do it. We managed to raise \$5 million, but it'll now cost \$6 million and we're too tired to keep trying.' And that's what happened to our poor show. It's the saddest thing."

The good news is that Captain America is soon to be a major motion from 21st Century Productions, a company that was formerly part of Cannon Films, which still intends to go forward with its own much-delayed Spider-Man movie (CS #4), and may share that film's director.

"The fellow who's going to direct Captain America is Albert Pyun," Lee reveals. "He did a movie called *The Sword and the Sorcerer* and a number of others. He's a great guy. He loves Captain America and he understands Captain America. Right now, we're discussing with we're going to hire to play Cap. Albert just sent me pictures of five actors that he's considering. They're all unknowns, the way Chris Reeve was before the *Superman* movie. The supporting cast, though, will be filled with many names. The script is by a fellow named Steven Tolkan who's really a fine writer. It's just wonderful."

Despite the coincidence of timing, the *Captain America* film is not a reworked version of the aborted Broadway musical.

TV series renewed. Story editor: Cary Bates.

* **Superman.** Cannon announced a *Superman V*. Animated series cancelled.

* **Swamp Thing.** Return of *Swamp Thing* in release.

* **Tales from the Crypt.** HBO Cable series debuts this month. (see article).

* **Tarzan.** TV movie, *Tarzan in Manhattan*, starred Joe Lara.

* **Thor.** Animated series.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** Animated series airing will add 52 new episodes to allow daily

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"It's very serious," Lee explains. "It has Captain America's origin. It takes place in America and in Europe, and it shows how he became Captain America. One surprise though: The Red Skull is the villain. Now those who know Captain America, know that the Red Skull is a German, a Nazi. Not in this movie. He's an Italian! After reading the script, I really didn't mind. It's so well done. Somehow, it works very well with the Red Skull being an Italian."

Although the early scenes will take place in World War II, this film will not be a period piece. It won't be a strict adaptation of the seminal Joe Simon/Jack Kirby *Captain America* of the 1940s, but neither will it exactly follow the hero's

revival as chronicled by Lee and Kirby in *Avengers* #4. The screenplay does lean heavily on Lee's interpretation of Captain America as a costumed Rip Van Winkle.

"What I tried to do was give Cap more personality than he had," Lee says, recalling how he updated the character back in 1964, "and play up the fact that he was a fellow who was out of synch with the world in which he was living."

"They do that in the movie," Lee explains. "The last thing *Captain America* remembers is that we were at war with the Nazis. He was shot down. He landed in a glacier somewhere and he remained frozen for about 25 years 'til he was found. So, when he's brought back

to life, he thinks the war is still going on. He doesn't know that all that time has elapsed."

From that point, the storyline will depart from the now-classic chain of events. Captain America will not be found by Sub-Mariner and he will not meet the Avengers.

"It happens that one of the people who finds Captain America is German," Lee says. "Cap thinks this is the enemy and he starts fighting with him. They finally half-convince him that he doesn't have to worry, that these people who brought him back are not enemy spies, and they say, 'No, you're in America. Everything is fine. We're going to take you back.' And they put him in the car, and he takes a look and it says 'Volkswagen.' And Cap says, 'I've seen movies like this where you try to trick the American.' Suddenly, he goes crazy. It's written much better than I'm telling it. I think those little touches, which I find very realistic, are going to make this work."

With both Marvel and its former parent company, New World, now owned by Revlon, Marvel is in a better position to exercise creative control over this and other Marvel properties planned for film and television. Marvel's creative enforcer will be none other than Lee himself, who is expected to act as executive co-producer on future Marvel adaptations, starting with *Captain America*. It's a responsibility he's just beginning to exercise.

"For a guy who hasn't really been in the movie business, this is so impressive," Lee says with the enthusiasm that marks his writing. "I feel like a casting director. I'm going to look at these pictures and five men's careers are going to be in my hands. It's a funny feeling. Actually, it won't be that way at all. I'll probably tell him they're all OK and there'll be 20 guys who make the decision."

"*Captain America* will go to camera pretty soon," Stan Lee concludes. "We have a director, we have the producer and we're going to cast it. Of course, there are still a million hitches that could develop, but it looks like they'll start shooting *Captain America* this year."

—Will Murray

weekday broadcast this fall. Live-action film for X-Mas '89 release. Script: Bobby Herbeck. Jim Henson's Creature Shop is creating the "live" Turtles.

* **Time Beavers.** Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

* **Tin-Tin.** Movie "on back burner" at Amblin.

* **Tom & Jerry.** Film. Also TV series spin-off. Tom & Jerry Kids.

* **Trouble with Girls.** Movie.

* **Unlimited Powers.** CBS TV series pilot with super-team of DC heroes: Dr. Occult, Blok (from *LSH*), Green Arrow's daughter & a new Flash.

* **V for Vendetta.** Movie. Warner Bros.

* **WARP.** Script: Mark Victor & Michael Crais, producers.

* **Watchmen.** Movie. Script: Sam Hamm. Terry Gilliam, director. Joel Silver, producer. Anton Furst, production designer. Fall film start.

* **Whisper.** Movie. Developed by Atlantic Releasing to star Vanity.

* **Wizard of Id.** Movie. Script: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen.

* **Wolverine.** Movie. Would end with character joining X-Men.

* **The X-Men.** Animated

primetime TV special/series pilot to air 1989-90.

* **Zen, Intergalactic Ninja.** Film. Animated series. Surge Licensing. Mark Freedman, exec producer.

* **Zippyvision.** Movie. Script: Bill Griffith & Diane Noonin.

* **Zorro—The Legend Continues.** co-produced by New World & France's Ellipse Programme.

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